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# SHORT STORIES

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR HOME AND TRAIN

No. 601. FOR WEEK ENDING JULY 7TH, 1900. [ONE PENNY.



## Allen Foster & Co.

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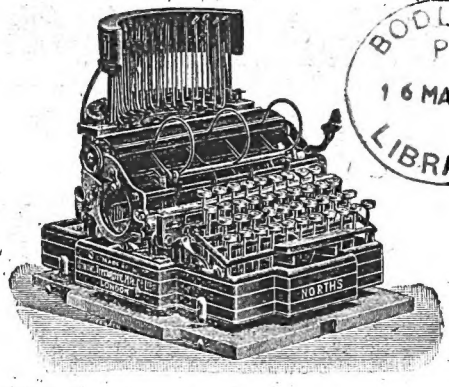


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No. 601.] [PRICE ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending July 7th, 1900.

# What I Owe Michael Ragsdale.

It was never my good fortune to meet Michael Ragsdale, although once his existence and mine touched one another very nearly.

A man who had come in contact with him at a club in town once told me that he never encountered a more charming and courteous gentleman, and that Ragsdale was as great a genius in his way as Napoleon and Goethe were in theirs. Another individual, who had had in Paris some experience with Mr. Ragsdale's methods, assured me that no greater villain ever went unhanged. So much depends upon the point of view.

The time to which I refer when this interesting person crossed my path (to use a good old theatrical phrase) was in March three years ago. I was then playing a rather unimportant part in a highly successful piece which had run all the season at the Frivolity Theatre.

At the time I speak of the theatre was closed temporarily. I was glad of the rest, for the season had been a long disappointment to me. This was because I had not been allowed to play the part of the Cardinal. Only an actor who knows himself to be well fitted to interpret a strong *rôle* and sees it given to someone else, can appreciate my feelings.

The whole of London was then ringing with the famous Blemworth-Dally diamond robbery, and had been for a week. But not the most brilliant jewel in that whole superb collection seemed as bright to my mind as did the lost opportunity to play the Cardinal. This is one of the bitter experiences associated with my profession.

On Tuesday of the week before Easter, I was reminded that other people beside myself had their troubles. At four o'clock in the afternoon I received by special messenger the following strange note:

MY DEAR CROWSMITH,—I find myself suddenly in deep trouble, and you can help me if you will. I am at present in Croydon, at Norman's Hotel. I must keep out of town for a while, and it is highly important that I should not be seen and recognised. Will you come down here this evening and bring me one or two of your wigs and a beard. Also, please bring a revolver, if possible, as I would feel safer with it. This sounds very mysterious, but I will explain all when I see you. Do not disappoint me, old friend—this is a matter of life and death.

Yours in distress,

H. WILLEY.

Destroy this.

*All rights reserved.*]

Harry Willey was a clever comedian, whose erratic nature had more than once caused him to be entangled in the meshes of the law. But he had a big heart, and had often proved his friendship to me. I could not neglect him in this extremity, and while making all manner of conjectures regarding the nature of this latest scrape of his, I set about carrying out his instructions.

I packed a handbag with a few articles of clothing I thought he might want, and put in two wigs, a false beard and a cavalry revolver I owned. Then, as a further aid to disguise, I added a pair of green goggles. It is necessary to my story that I relate my subsequent movements in some detail.

I left the Berkshire where I was then staying, at 5.30 o'clock, and as I went out I received my last correspondence, which included a paper, from the clerk at the desk with whom I left the key.

I then went to London Bridge and caught the train for Croydon. On my way I opened my letters, which were unimportant, and turned to the paper, which was addressed to me in a strange hand. It was a copy of an illustrated weekly publication issued that day. As I turned the leaves I came suddenly upon a full-page portrait of myself.

Pleased as I was of this mark of recognition of my artistic merit, I could not think how the editors had obtained the picture. I had not been asked for one, nor could I recall the photograph of which it was a reproduction. From the picture my eyes wandered to the lettering beneath it, and I gave a great start as I read:

"Michael Ragsdale, bank-robber, forger, counterfeiter and expert thief, the man who committed the great Blemworth-Dally diamond robbery, and for whom the entire police force of the city is searching."

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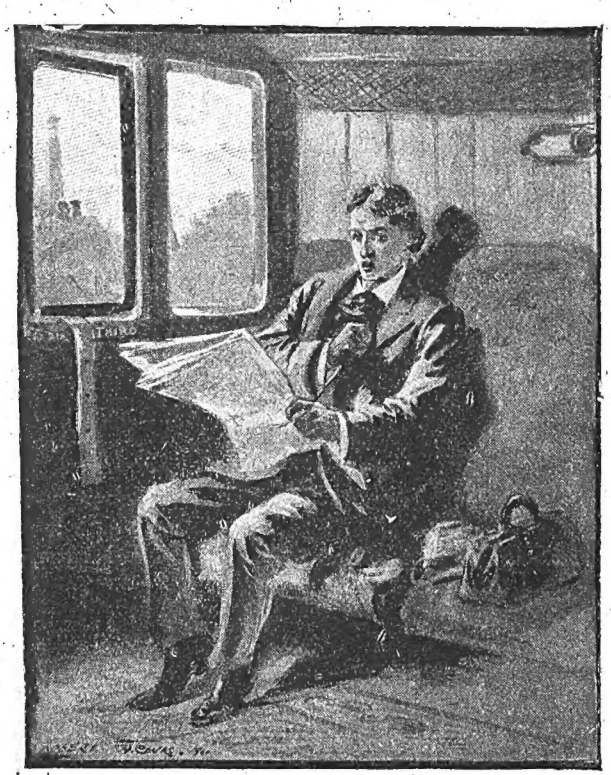
With the realization that this was not my likeness at all, but that of a vicious criminal, came a decidedly disagreeable sensation.

This Michael Ragsdale, then, looked so much like me that I, myself, was deceived by his picture. The resemblance was certainly amazing. After a further contemplation of the face of this worthy, I turned to a sketch of his life on the opposite page.

No one knew whence this wonderful man, with the face of an ascetic, and the soul of an arch-fiend, had come. He was believed to have been born in New South Wales. It was certain that long before he was twenty he was fairly launched upon a life of crime in that colony. He appeared in England in 1876, and was concerned in several daring robberies. He went successively to Paris, Vienna and Berlin, with always the same story of successful knavery. Twice only was he captured on the Continent, and both times made his escape under such remarkable circumstances as to suggest the supernatural.

Then he went back to America. In San Francisco he



I came suddenly upon a full-page portrait of myself.

directed the celebrated Wattles Bank robbery in which a clerk was d ugged and a watchman killed. In Chicago he turned up as the head of a gang of counterfeiters.

There, after months of successful operation, he was captured, but on the very evening of his arrest he knocked senseless, with the handcuffs which bound him, the detective who had him in charg , and vanished like a wraith.

In New Orleans he was again taken, and escaped from a prison yard, to have egress from which he must have scaled a wall forty feet high. No trace of rope or ladder was found. Many other such instances were given.

His reappearance in London in 1891, and his part in the great robbery by which Duhamel and Co., the jewellers, lost £50,000, were well remembered. On that occasion, too, he was arrested, and this was the only time on record that Michael Ragsdale was ever brought to trial. The great sensation which his acquittal on a technicality caused would not soon be forgotten. From the day he bowed politely to the judge, who frowningly discharged him, up to the night of the Blemworth-Dally diamond robbery, Michael Ragsdale had not again been seen in London.

Then followed a graphic description of the famous sensation. No more brilliant feat of robbery from a second-storey room had ever been attempted.

The success of Ragsdale's plans were imperilled at the last moment, but again his wonderful pluck saved him.

Mr. Dally had forgotten his opera glasses, and sent his man back for them. The servant, ascending the stairs, saw the thief in the hall, and made a leap for him. Ragsdale had recourse to no noisy firearms, or tell-tale knives, but a blow from his powerful arm sent the man backward down the flight of stairs.

Stunned, and with a broken arm, the plucky fellow staggered to the front door, and shouted an alarm. It was answered promptly, but Ragsdale had vanished into the night, and the jewels with him. Within twenty minutes the full story of the robbery was at the police headquarters.

Mr. Dally's man had obtained a good view of the burglar in the brightly lighted hall, and when he said "he looked like a gentleman, and something like a clergyman," Mike Ragsdale was the name which sprang to the mind of every detective who heard the description.

It was a splendid case by which to test the merits of the Detective Department.

From that night on, every means of escape from the city was watched by lynx-eyed men, each of whom had the features of Michael Ragsdale burned into his brain.

When I had finished reading this entertaining sketch, I turned again to the portrait.

"Well, Ragsdale, my double," I said, "we are both artists in our way, it seems, only you are recognised as such, while I—ah, if I only had the part of Cardinal!"

I sighed as my thoughts returned to the grievance which beset me.

With my penknife I cut the picture from the paper and put it in my pocket. We were now at New Croydon station. I took up my bag and leaving the station walked towards the hotel.

Suddenly I felt each arm grasped from behind by a pair of strong hands. I turned and saw a grim face and stalwart figure on either side.

"What does this mean?" I demanded.

A third figure appeared in front of me and slipped a pair of steel bracelets over my wrist. Then I had my answer.

"It means, Mike Ragsdale, that we want you."

In vain I declared I was not Mike Ragsdale, but only an innocent actor named Crowsmith on his way to see a friend.

The detectives hurried me along through the streets

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without heeding my words, intent only upon escaping the crowd which had begun to gather. When I found that I must go with them I protested against the indignity of the handcuffs, but without avail. Silently they took me to another platform where we got into an up-train which was about to start. A detective sat on each side of me while two others sat opposite. I was certainly an important capture.

After I had recovered from the first shock occasioned by my arrest and saw that the detectives were considerably aiding me in concealing my manacles, I even felt a grim humour in the situation. I promised myself that this false arrest should be dearly paid for, and the thought even crossed my mind that it would be a good advertisement for William Crowsmith, comedian.

When we arrived at London Bridge Station the news of an important arrest had evidently preceded us. The barrier was surrounded by newspaper men.

I was hurried into a cab and driven to Bow Street, where I was taken at once into the private room of Inspector Fitzallen, the senior officer on duty. He was a tall fine-looking man, who sat at his desk with an appearance of great composure, which seemed, I thought, not quite genuine. He gave one quick glance at me and then addressed the man who still held me firmly by the right arm.

"Detective-Sergeant Canby," he said, "you are deserving of great credit for having effected the capture of one of the most dangerous criminals of the century. I confess I did not attach much importance to that anonymous letter. Your judgment was better than mine, and I shall recommend you for promotion. Well, Mr. Ragsdale," addressing me in a tone of light raillery, "I suppose you are ready to tell me now where the jewels are."

"I am not Mr. Ragsdale," I said, with what dignity I could command, "but an actor of the Frivolity Theatre Company. My name is William Crowsmith, and I am the victim of an outrageous blunder for which someone shall suffer."

The Inspector raised his eyebrows slightly, and said:

"What is in that bag?"

Sergeant Canby forced the slight lock and enumerated the articles as he took them out:

"One brown wig, one light wig, one brown beard and moustache, a pair of green goggles, one large revolver," the rest of the articles were clothing.

"Mr. Ragsdale pays a high compliment to the London police," said the Inspector in the same mocking tone, "in not deeming it worth while to assume these clumsy disguises here. He was doubtless reserving them for 'the road.'"

Then my pockets were searched. I had no letters, having destroyed Willey's, and my pocket-book contained no cards. The only thing of interest found here was the portrait of Ragsdale.

"Ah, the picture in this week's *Illustrated London News*—an excellent one it is, too," said the Inspector; "it seems to have struck his fancy. How many were there in the gang, Ragsdale?" this in an easy, confidential tone.

"I belong to no 'gang,'" I said, my voice shaking with anger, "and I repeat that I am not Ragsdale."

Inspector Fitzallen paid not the slightest attention to what I said. He beckoned to Canby and the other detective, and the three held a long whispered consultation. It was interrupted by a sharp rap at the door, and a policeman hurried in.

"Walters is here, Inspector," he said, saluting

Inspector Fitzallen turned to me and said in a hard voice:

"Ragsdale, I am going to take off your handcuffs."

The handcuffs removed, I was placed against the wall in line with half-a-dozen men in plain clothes. At a signal the policeman who had saluted returned, bringing a man who had a discoloured circle round his left eye and carried one arm in a sling.

"Walters," said Inspector Fitzallen, "if you see here the man whom you saw on the night of the 21st—the man who knocked you downstairs, put your hand on him."

Walters glanced along the line once. His face was very pale as he took two steps forward and pointed at me.

"That is the man," he said.

"Touch him," said the Inspector.

The man came nearer, put a finger on my shoulder and stepped back quickly.

"That is all, thank you," said the Inspector.

His face indicated the greatest satisfaction.

"Inspector Fitzallen!" I burst out, feeling myself possessed of sudden fury, "do you mean to ignore me utterly? I have told you again and again that I am not Michael Ragsdale, and have told you who I am. I, an innocent man, have been dragged through the streets in a most humiliating manner, and have been threatened by you and your men because of my resemblance—a very strong one I admit—to a vile criminal. The resemblance is so striking as to have deceived even myself, for when I saw that picture this afternoon I thought it was my own. You must not treat me like this—you must listen to me."

My words had had an effect, I could see, and I followed up my advantage, speaking earnestly but more calmly:

"I know from the papers that you have not been long in your present position. To have effected the capture of this celebrated thief, who has eluded justice for all these years, would make your name famous on both sides of the ocean. But to let it go forth to the world that you have made this brilliant catch, and find out in the morning that you have bagged only a harmless actor, will make a laughing stock of you. Surely you will lose nothing by moving carefully, and I can prove my identity in thirty minutes."

The Inspector was visibly interested. He paused a moment before he said:

"How can you prove that your claim is true?"

"By simply sending a line to the manager of the Frivolity Theatre, or to one of my friends at the Berkshire, where I am staying. Please give me some paper and a pencil."

The Inspector hesitated, again eyeing me closely. Then he took a pad of paper from his desk.

"It seems ridiculous under the circumstances," he muttered, "but I will do it."

I wrote two notes both to the same effect, that by a singular mistake I had been arrested as the man who had committed the Blenworth-Dally robbery, and begging the recipient to come at once to the Police Station and identify me.

"One of these notes is to Mr. Hopkins, manager of the Frivolity," I told Inspector Fitzallen. "The theatre is closed, and your messenger may not be able to find him easily. The other note is to my friend, Mr. Rostyn, who is staying at the Berkshire. He is almost sure to be there at this hour. Should he not be, have your messenger show the note to the proprietor, or the

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**A blow from his powerful arm sent the man backward down the stairs.**

clerk at the desk. Everyone about the hotel knows me."

The officer took the notes, read both of them, and pressed a button on his desk for a messenger.

After the man had gone he did not speak to me again, but I caught him looking at me in a peculiar manner two or three times, and I felt that in spite of the identification made by Mr. Blumworth-Dally's man he was not altogether satisfied with the night's work.

I do not think he relished my presence in the room during the wait, for calling in the two principal detectives, he gave them some whispered order, and I was marched out between them.

I was taken to a large, brightly lighted cell, and a comfortable chair was handed in to me. The two men did not leave the cell door after I was locked in.

The time of waiting seemed very long, but at length the summons came to bring me in.

I walked between the two men back into the Inspector's room.

The Inspector sat at his desk, and beside him stood the messenger. Detectives in plain clothes and men in uniform were all about.

After a rapid glance round the room I looked at the Inspector, expecting his apology for arresting and detaining me. He was looking at me sternly. I became suddenly aware that the detectives retained a tight hold on my arms. The voice of the Inspector in harsh, staccato tones broke the silence:

"Well, Ragsdale, perhaps you will be good enough to tell me what that trick of yours meant."

"Why do you continue to address me by that name?" I said. "As for your insulting remark, I don't know what it means."

"It means," he said, speaking slowly and distinctly, "that Mr. William Crowsmith, the actor, whom you claim to be, is at home in bed."

"It is a lie!" I burst out, "for I am William Crowsmith, and it is you who have tricked me. You did not send the messenger, so sure were you of your game."

The Inspector smiled indulgently.

"Riggs," he said, "will you repeat for Mr. Ragsdale and the gentlemen of the Press all that you told me a few minutes ago."

P.C. Riggs stepped forward, and, with evident appreciation of the importance of his story, began:

"I first went to Mr. Hopkins' house in Lincoln Street. He wasn't there, and his whereabouts wasn't known. Then I went up to the Berkshire and found Mr. Rostyn in. He is a tall gentleman, with reddish face and hair white on the temples. I gave him the note, and after he had read it he said:

"'Why, this is very strange, I can't understand it. Mr. Crowsmith was here a little while ago, and is in his own apartment now, unless I am very much mistaken.'

"He asked me what time the man was arrested. I said, 'Six o'clock.'

"He said, 'It was nearly half-past, I know, when Crowsmith came in here. He was suffering from toothache. He had started to go to Croydon to see a friend, he said, but turned back because his tooth was so bad. I gave him something to put on it, and he left, saying he was going to bed.'

"Then Mr. Rostyn looked at the note again and remarked that it did look like Crowsmith's writin'."

"Mr. Ragsdale is an expert penman, as we all know," interjected Sergeant Canby.

"And then," continued Riggs, "he said he'd go and see, and told me I could go with him if I liked. I followed him down the hall and turned into another little hall about thirty feet away, and he rapped on a door. He had to rap twice before he got an answer, and then the gentle-

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man inside said very cross-like, "'Well, what do you want?'

"'It's me, Crowsmith,' said Mr. Rostyn, 'I want to speak to you a minute.'

"'What is it, Rostyn?' he said, still quite impatient-like.

"'You're not in any trouble, are you?' asked Mr. Rostyn.

"'Yes, I am, in a lot of trouble with this infernal tooth,' and the gentleman swore a little; 'did you wake me up to ask me that?'

"'No,' says the other one, 'but I've got a note from you here saying you've been arrested and that you're in prison. You haven't been arrested, have you?'

"Then Mr. Crowsmith swore a good deal more, and we could hear him punching his pillows. He told Mr. Rostyn he thought it was a mean trick of him coming and waking him up when he knew he was suffering, just to play a poor joke on him. Mr. Rostyn seemed to feel pretty bad about it himself, and told me to come back and tell you, sir, that Mr. Crowsmith was in bed and that he guessed you'd caught a 'sharp one.'

I listened to this amazing recital first with indignation and then with astonishment. The man was telling the truth—that was evident.

Then, suddenly, I felt the half-hypnotic influence of all those eyes fastened upon me. Every man in that room believed me to be a clumsy liar, and had it not been proved that I was one?

The test I myself proposed had resulted that the man I claimed to be was at his home, while the friend I had appealed to had pronounced me a "sharper." What could I say? I had no longer strength or indignation left for another outburst. My only feeling was one of shame, and muttering something, I did not know what, I bowed my head.

The papers of the following morning somehow got to know about my interview, and described this scene far more graphically than I can.

"When Ragsdale was brought in," they said, "his appearance surprised those who had never seen him before.

"He is of medium height, but his figure is upright and commanding. He has a fine tranquil eye and a scholarly mouth and jaw.

"He gazed about the room with an air of conscious inborn superiority to the men who held him prisoner. His expression of intense astonishment as he listened to the recital of Inspector Fitzallen's messenger was more admirably acted than the finest histrionic effort of Mr. William Crowsmith.

"When it was over, however, the realisation that the game was up seemed to strike him suddenly. The charmed life had come to an end. In Inspector Fitzallen this master-thief and arch criminal had at last met his match. A deep blush succeeded by a greyish pallor o'erspread his face. The flexible mouth moved, but no words came. Then the thin lips were drawn back tightly, exposing the strong white fangs. A baleful gleam shot from the narrowed eyes. The expression was that of a wolf which sees vanishing the last hope of escape from the trap which clutches him, Michael Ragsdale lowered his head. He owned himself beaten at last.

"What his object was no one can guess. The scheme was a clumsy one, for the resemblance to the actor is not in any way marked, and this is probably the first time in his career that Michael Ragsdale has ever been accused of clumsiness. He wanted to gain time, evidently, but whatever his hope it perished miserably, and one could not suppress a feeling akin to pity for the man as he was led back to his cell in almost a state of collapse.

"Inspector Fitzallen probably suspected an attempt at suicide, for he ordered a double guard to be placed over Ragsdale for the night."

That night of horror I shall not attempt to describe. Before morning I was half persuaded that I was, in fact, Ragsdale, and that I had been leading some hideous dual existence of which I was only now becoming dimly aware. I wondered what my punishment would be, for I saw no possible hope of escape now. It seemed useless to send for any more of my friends, for was I not at home asleep?—and to-morrow I would be walking about among them. I thought that possibly William Crowsmith would come to the prison or the court-room to look at me, and I felt a vague curiosity to see him.

I even remembered poor Willey waiting for me in Croydon. He would be greatly disappointed, but perhaps the other Mr. Crowsmith would go when his tooth got better.

Next morning, Bow Street Police-court contained an

Suddenly I felt each arm grasped from behind.

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interested assemblage. Of course Inspector Fitzallen was there, and so were Mr. Blemworth-Dally, and half-a-dozen of his aristocratic friends.

Outside the rail every inch of space was filled with the great public, and the doors were surrounded with hundreds of others clamouring for admission. All knew from the morning papers that Michael Ragsdale had been taken the night before, and that he was to appear in Court this morning.

I knew nothing of all these people until afterwards, for I paid little attention to externals then. I was only anxious to get away from that crowd, whose eyes I could feel staring at me as at some caged beast.

Mr. Dally told his story and Mr Dally's man again identified me. Inspector Fitzallen and Detective-sergeant Canby also talked but I listened to none of them. It all seemed such an old story now, and its truth as far as I was concerned was practical, if not actual.

The magistrate addressed one or two questions to me, but I shook my head.

I heard the magistrate say, "I must adjourn the examination till Friday," and then Inspector Fitzallen, who now treated me with the greatest consideration, asked me if I had thought of engaging counsel.

I was about to reply that I did not consider it necessary when I caught sight of something — the only real, tangible thing I had seen since I entered upon this strange world of unreality. It was the florid face and white hair of Rostyn, who was forcing his way through the crowd towards the railing. I caught his eye, and held my breath while I waited.

"Crowsmith, old man, what must you think?" he said, as he grasped my hand.

After this I did not care. I knew who I was and knew that I should soon be free. I felt faint, and dizzy, for I had eaten nothing since my arrest, and I leaned heavily against the railing. I caught only fragments of what followed.

"But, your worship," Inspector Fitzallen was saying, "this is the very man who sent me word last night that he had seen and talked to Mr. Crowsmith after the time that the prisoner was arrested."

"That is true," replied Rostyn, "but early this morning I went to Mr. Crowsmith's room and found him gone, and the bed not slept in. I thought, in view of the note I had received, something strange must have happened, and I came down here to investigate. All I know is that I can swear that is Mr. Crowsmith standing there."

"Your worship, this may be some new trick of this dangerous man. The people cannot accept any such absurd identification. Who is this Mr. Rostyn?"

"You vouch for the prisoner being Mr. Crowsmith, Mr. Rostyn; can anyone vouch for you?" said the magistrate.

Rostyn looked round the court-room.

"Yes; I think I see someone," he said, smiling.

Mr. Hopkins, the Frivolity manager, was pressing toward the magistrate's bench, and just behind him came Harry Willey.

Both seized my hands, and while Mr. Hopkins began to explain that he had received my note only an hour ago, Willey interrupted with a question about why I had written that strange letter begging him to come up to London yesterday. Everything seemed to be in a muddle, and the next thing I heard was the magistrate's voice saying:

He took two steps forward and pointed at me.

"There can be no doubt, Inspector Fitzallen, that your men made a blunder. This gentleman has been unmistakably identified as William Crowsmith. The question now is, who was the man in Mr. Crowsmith's room last night?"

No one replied to the question. I looked at Inspector Fitzallen's face and then I began to understand.

* * * * *

Somewhere, it may be in New York, Hamburg or Buda Pesth, that demoniac, dynamic force is still at work, and wherever it appears the power of evil triumphant is demonstrated anew. When the story of that strange life is written there can be in it no more wonderful chapter than that which tells how he eluded the entire London police force after the Blemworth-Dally diamond robbery.

Ragsdale was imprisoned in the city as a lion is imprisoned in a wood which the hunters have surrounded. He might rove to and fro in this forest of brick and stone for a greater or less period, but his ultimate capture was certain. He knew when not to tempt Fate too far, and he acquiesced in the inevitable—Michael Ragsdale must be taken.

At some time, it may have been months or years before this, he had learned of a rather obscure actor who bore a marvellous resemblance to himself. That

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man was then marked as his own, to be used in a possible day of need. The day had come, and the man was here. He should act as a vicarious Michael Ragsdale, and be taken in his stead.

He gleaned some particulars of the actor's friends and habits and then the plot was formed. The decoy letter, purporting to be written by a friend in trouble and asking the actor to come with disguises—the letter getting the friend himself out of the way, and the anonymous note warning the police—all were his work. So was the paper containing his portrait—posted to arrive in the nick of time, and with the wigs and fire-arms made a nice accumulation of presumptive evidence.

The plan worked like a charm. We moved in accordance with his will like the pieces on a chess-board, and Crowsmith, hastening to the relief of his friend, was caught with the incriminating evidence upon him.

Thus far, however, the plot was one which could have been devised by almost any clever intelligence. Only a Ragsdale could have conceived the act of sublime daring which followed.

It was highly probable that Mr. Crowsmith would be able to prove his identity within an hour after his arrest. Then all the cunning scheming would go for naught. The thing must be fixed up properly, and the news go forth throughout the city and the country that Ragsdale had been caught. Then the detectives would be called off, and the way would be clear for escape. Mr. Crowsmith would send, naturally, to his manager and his hotel.

The former was difficult to find at this time. The main reliance would be placed on his friends in the house where he lived, and there he must be found.

Accordingly, within twenty minutes of the time when Michael Ragsdale was arrested at Croydon, William Crowsmith, attired in the long, light overcoat and soft hat he always wore, walked leisurely into the Berkshire. He asked for his key at the desk, and spoke a few words to the clerk on duty. Then he went to his own room, stopping on the way to speak to his particular friend, Rostyn.

Mr. Crowsmith had the toothache, and kept a handkerchief pressed to his lips for the greater part of the time. This was also his reason for retiring early.

When the messenger from the Court arrived with a ridiculous forged note Mr. Crowsmith was in bed—apparently.

But sometime in the dead of night Mr. Crowsmith left the room and the house unseen. His pockets were filled with letters and papers by which he could easily prove his identity in case he should be stopped. And since the hour when William Crowsmith vanished into the night, Michael Ragsdale has never been seen.

As for me, with the disappearance from the scene of that marvellous personality, I became the central figure in this nine days' wonder. My picture was in every shop window. People came from miles round to see the man who had been so potent a factor in the escape of the famous criminal, and who bore so startling a resemblance to him.

And thus it was that I came prominently before the public, for when the theatre reopened—and this is what I owe to Michael Ragsdale—I played the part of the Cardinal.

Francis Livingstone.


# THE YELLOW PERIL

In to-day's issue of the Illustrated Weekly News appears the first instalment of Mr. M. P. Shiel's Great War Story,

## "THE YELLOW PERIL."

At the present moment the eyes of the whole world are turned to China. What has the future in store? Is this the spark that will set the world in flames and bring about the death struggle of the nations? In this great story,

## "THE YELLOW PERIL,"

the author endeavours to show, in the form of a romance, how China, ably led, could fight the world, could over-run Asia and Europe, could, by the mere weight of numbers alone, wipe out of existence every "foreign devil" in the two continents.

Let us beg of you not to miss reading the opening chapters of this great story. Go to your newsagent now and say the paper must be obtained for you, and kept for you till you call for it.

## "THE YELLOW PERIL."

starts this week, fully illustrated, and here are the chapter headings to give you some faint idea of its interest.

Chapter 1, The Nations and a Man; 2, The Heathen Chinee; 3, Rumours of War; 4, First Blood; 5, How England took the News; 6, Hardy; 7, In the Channel; 8, The Battle; 9, John Hardy gives an Order; 10, John Hardy among Women; 11, John Hardy among the Nations; 12, The Awakening; 13, John and Yen; 14, The Vanished Fleet; 15, The Suicide of Europe; 16, The Love which Foo-chee bore to Ah-lin; 17, The Chinese Iron; 18, Sin-wan; 19, 'The Hundred and Eighty'; 20, 'What a Face!' 21, Murray's Diary; 22, Murray's Diary (*continued*); 23, The Frown of England; 24, Before the Battle; 25, The Greater Waterloo; 26, The Yellow Peril; 27, The Three Gospels; 28, The Yellow Terror; 29, The Weak Point; 30, The Chinese Scream; 31, The Meeting; 32, 'To-day'; 33, The 'Crime' of Hardy; 34, The Black Spot

This story appeared in - - -

**SHORT STORIES**

some years ago under the title,

**"Empress of the Earth."**


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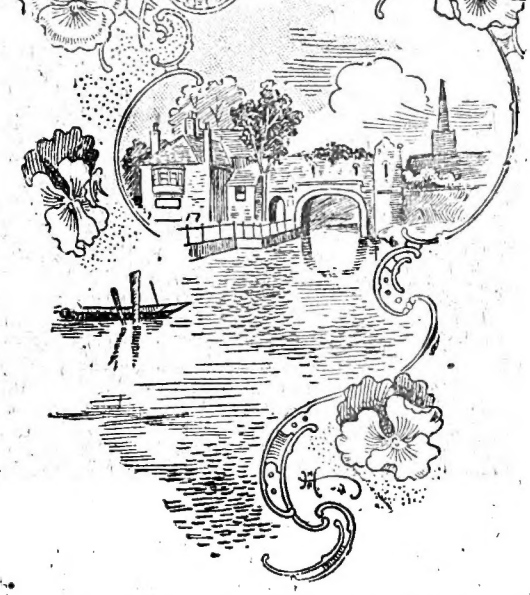
# A Lover's Scheme.



I HAD been in Athens three or four days when the steamer from Brindisi brought in an English tourist named Burns and an American gentleman and his daughter named Wallace.

Mr. Wallace, as I soon came to understand, was a gentleman of wealth and leisure, and his daughter was as handsome a girl as had ever landed in the country of tombs, mosquitoes, beggars and brigands.

As for Burns, I believe he was some sort of Civil Service *employé* on leave, but he had some money and greater expectations. The three had become acquainted while doing Italy.

More than that, Burns had fallen head over ears in love with Miss Wallace. I am inclined to think she was a bit of a coquette and that she encouraged him out of a spirit of adventure. The father was a dignified, quiet-spoken man, who probably had his own plans for his daughter and trusted her not to go too far with the Englishman.

While he treated Burns in a courteous manner, there was a reserve which the latter did not dare approach too closely. I thought I saw through the whole thing at a glance. It was love and dollars on the Englishman's part, and on the part of the girl a desire for flirtation and a half hope that the man would make a fool of himself.

We all became acquainted in a day's time, and after the expiration of another day young Burns gave me his confidence. He was in love for the first time in his life. He had never dreamed that there were angels on earth until he met Miss Wallace. The man who charged him with a mercenary feeling wronged him in the most terrible manner. He had somehow heard that her father was a millionaire and that she was an only child, but he begged me to understand that he was loving her with his whole soul before that news reached him. I believed him, and he added:

"And now comes the question, 'Does Miss Wallace love me in return?' There are times when I think she does, and my heels lift off the ground; and there are other times when I doubt it, and I feel as if a house had fallen on me."

"Why not ask her?" I suggested.

"I'm afraid it's too soon," he replied, "and then the old gentleman somehow always manages to show up just as we get sentimental. I don't think he appreciates me. If I went to him and said I loved his daughter, I believe he'd keep on reading his newspaper and smoking his beastly black cigar—I really do! If I only had someone to sound him for me!"

"You ought to do something heroic to win the girl's admiration and love, and the father's gratitude and esteem," I said after a long while.

"Well, I just about think I will!" he promptly replied—"that is, I would if there were a chance. I was ready to save them both if the steamer went down, but she simply rolled about like a log in a pond and refused to sink when I prayed for it."

"But there may be other opportunities."

"How can there be unless to keep the mosquitoes and beggars off? My goodness, but I suffer!"

I didn't see how I could help him except to advise him to learn his fate on the morrow and have it done with, and then go up to Marathon and see the ruins and the tombs and get out of Greece. Loverlike, he went out into the balmy evening to commit suicide, and I saw him no more until next afternoon.

He not only still lived, but there was a look of happiness on his face as I saw him talking to a man I would not have cared to meet a mile out of town at noonday. That evening Mr. Wallace informed me that he and his daughter and Burns were going over to Marathon by rail next day to be gone for a couple of days, and at a later hour the lover sat down beside me to say:

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"I've got a fine game on foot, old chap."

"Going to become a hero?" I asked.

"If I don't, then you may call me a donkey. Yes, sir, I've taken your advice, and there'll be something happen within a day or two. Thanks, awfully, for the hint. I hope to come back arm in arm with the old gent and to have matters all settled with the daughter, my boy."

As I had been at Marathon I had declined to make one of the party. They got off in good time next morning, and Burns was in high spirits and acting like a young man who felt solid ground beneath his feet.

To my surprise, Mr. Wallace and his daughter returned by the evening train, and they had an adventure to relate.

From Marathon you make a tour of the tombs on the backs of donkeys, and it is a rough road and full of ambushes.

The trio had started out by themselves and made fair progress when a couple of picturesque villains suddenly pounced out upon them. The escort of a man and his two boys fled at once, and the villains were about to lead the donkeys up into the hills when Burns came to the rescue. He alone was armed. He descended from his saddle and began shooting, and after tumbling over themselves the scoundrels left him in possession of the battle-field.

He had saved the party, and he was a hero, entitled to admiration and gratitude, but before the father could pat him on the head or the daughter announce that his love was returned something else happened.

Shots were fired from behind a ruin, and the donkeys ridden by father and daughter started off into a gallop followed by the others. Burns was not hit, but in his confusion over the new attack he lingered and was captured.

Thus the hero of one moment became the captive of the next.

When the others had reached a place of safety, they learnt that their saviour had fallen into the hands of regular brigands, headed by old Beppo, and, though a show of pursuit was made by a detachment of soliders, the fellows were not overtaken.

As soon as I had heard the story I saw the little scheme Burns had worked.

He had hired a couple of rascals in Athens to go over to Marathon and play brigands for him, but after becoming a hero, a gang of the genuine article swooped down on him and carried him off.

The only man in Marathon or Athens who was at all disturbed over the matter was the landlord of the hotel, who feared he might not get his bill settled. Mr. Wallace and his daughter seemed to have a suspicion after their return that a little job had been put up, but the father came forward and guaranteed the hotel bill, and not a great deal was said. Two days later an ugly faced native presented Wallace with a note from Burns. He had not only been carried off, but the brigands wanted five hundred pounds in gold for his ransom. In his trunk he had about fifty pounds, but they had refused that. The rascals took it that he was a rich man's prospective son-in-law and that the five hundred pounds would be forthcoming at once, but the American carried the note to the British consulate.

The minister was away for a holiday, and the official in charge had no intention of disturbing himself in the matter.

He said he would notify the Greek government and that in due time the matter would be settled.

Two days later there was a second note.

Burns said if the messenger came back without the cash he would lose one of his ears.

When this was handed in at the consulate, it was greeted with the remark:

"The case must take the usual course, and he was an ass to go and get captured."

Two days passed again, and this time the messenger handed Mr. Wallace a bulky letter. Its bulk arose from the fact that one of Burns' ears was inclosed.

In the letter he stated that unless the cash was raised he would lose the other.

The sight of the ear stirred them up at the consulate—that is, another demand was made on the Greek government, and the Greek government replied that the case would be taken up in its regular order.

Then Wallace did a handsome thing. The messenger had been detained to see what the minister would do, and, as it was plain that nothing would be done until too late, the ransom was paid.

It was three days before the prisoner was handed over. His right ear had been sliced off beautifully, and he had had a hard time of it moving about on the mountains in the company of the villains. He did not come to the hotel, but sent for me to come to the lodgings he had secured. While his gratitude to Wallace was unbounded and he said he would speedily arrange to repay him, he did not want to meet him.

"Egad," said he, "but don't you see how it is? The hero is no hero, but an ass! He must have seen through my little game. The fact is, the two terrible villains I had hired for the little comedy began to fall down and beg for their lives before I had fired a shot. I believe the old gent was smiling when the donkeys started to run. The brutes overdid it, you see. No, I can't see him. It would quite upset me if he took my hand and pressed it and said: 'Hero, I thank thee for thy gallant conduct.'"

"But the girl?" I queried.

"Egad, but that's worse yet. I saw her looking at one of the villains to see where he was hit, and I heard her ask her father 'if the fellow wasn't running rather fast for a wounded man.' I couldn't face it, you know. She might fall on my neck and call me a hero and declare that I saved her life, but it's more likely that she'd welcome me as the prize donkey of the century. Really, but I couldn't take chances, absolutely."

"And how about your volcanic and overwhelming love, angels on earth and so forth?"

"Why, hang it, man, can't you understand the situation? Haven't I lost an ear and made an ass of myself, and does a one-eared ass love like a two-eared man? Can't you see that the rest of my life will be spent in feeling for the ear that's probably been thrown to the dogs of Athens? And when I'm not feeling for the ear I'll be training a lock of hair to fall down where it ought to be, and if there's any time left, I'll put it in kicking myself, d'ye see?"

I saw and sent his belongings over to him and gave him my sympathy, and that evening when I told Miss Wallace that he was going by the next boat, a small grin hovered round her mouth as she replied:

"Papa must find me that ear as a souvenir!"

C. B. Lewis.

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# Mr. Bowser's Tribulations.

## XIII. HE COMES HOME GOOD-NATURED AND GOES TO BED HAPPY.

WHEN Mr. Bowser let himself into the house the other evening he did something which almost made Mrs. Bowser jump out of her shoes.

He called out in a cheery voice:

"Where is that blessed little wife of mine! Why isn't she here to receive a dozen kisses?"

"You—you are home?" she faltered, as she met him at the door of the sitting-room, and wondered if she had heard aright.

"Of course I'm here, old sweetheart!" he exclaimed as he gave her a kiss on the cheek and a pat on the head. "Glad to see your hubby, eh? How's dinner? Of course you've got something delicious to eat."

He kissed her again, and then putting his arm round her in a loverlike way escorted her to the dining-room.

The meal was no better and no worse than the average, but Mr. Bowser praised everything sky high, and uttered a jolly laugh between every sentence. Mrs. Bowser was puzzled from the start. It wasn't the weather for sunstrokes. He had no shares in any gold mine. He couldn't have been hypnotized or lost his identity.

She looked at him furtively, and puzzled and wondered, but could not make things clear. He called her dear and darling, asked her after the health of her mother, and as dessert was brought on he took a five pound note from his pocket and tossed it over to her and hilariously exclaimed:

"There you are, best of all women, and you can have forty more if you want 'em—yes a hundred. Whoop! By George, but I am a happy man!"

Mrs. Bowser took a long look at him, and it ended with a painful suspicion creeping into her heart.

Mrs. Bowser took a long look at him.

He had often charged her with attempts to murder him, and on a hundred different occasions had threatened separation proceedings.

Suppose he had at last determined to go to the courts. Suppose, driven to the last resource, he had determined to murder her. Such good nature, hilarity and liberality must surely cover some sinister motive. She was almost afraid of him as they returned to the sitting-room and he danced her about and laughed till the tears stood in his eyes. When he finally let her go he said:

"Come, now, let's talk of old times—of the days of our courtship and honeymoon. You must have a lot of my old love letters put away. Get 'em out and let's read 'em over."

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"But you'd be ashamed of 'em and get angry," she replied.

"Not at all, sweetheart. I remember that I used to write you some splendid old love letters, but why should I be ashamed? Weren't they written to the dearest, sweetest, bestest, darlingest little woman in all this world? Mrs. Bowser, do you know that I love you even more than on the day we were married?"

"Do you? Why, sometimes I—I——"

"Yes, sometimes I come home and make a row and threaten to get a separation, but it's all wind, and doesn't count for anything. There are times when I ought to be taken out and kicked. Please forgive your old hubby for being a crank. You won't get a separation from me, will you? You'll give me a chance to redeem myself—you surely will?"

"I never thought of separation," she said as his eyes filled with tears and his lip trembled.

"I thought you were going to get one and wreck my life. Do you know, I couldn't live without you? If you should get a separation and get rid of me and marry again I'd—I'd——"

And Mr. Bowser was overcome by his feelings, and the tears rolled down his cheeks and he began weeping.

Mrs. Bowser now abandoned the theory that he might be plotting separation proceedings, but would not a husband who meditated a cold-blooded midnight murder adopt just this course to disarm suspicion?

"It's so good of you not to want to get rid of me!" he continued, after a minute. "Shome wives would want to get rid of their husbands right out and not give them a chance. Mrs. Bowser, do you want er fifty pounds to buy shoes and stockings?"

"No, not so much, dear. The five pounds you have given me will be plenty for the time being."

"You jest shay zhat because you love me—you love me—but I'm goin' ter make you take fifty pounds. Yes, I want you to buy five hundred pounds' worth of shoes and stockings. Shometimes I have come home and made a fuss about the gas bill. Will you forgive me for it? If you will you may burn a thousand pounds' worth of gas and I won't say a word."

"Mr. Bowser," she said, as she got an altogether new idea and began to look at him more closely, "what were you doing this afternoon?"

"What er I doing?" he repeated as he looked at her in a vacant way. "I want er doing nozzings 'tall."

"Didn't you meet an old friend?"

"Ole fren'? Yes, I er met ole fren'. Ole fren' asked me to go out and play er game billiards wiz him, and I went. Shay, Mrs. Bowser, I beat that ole fren' seven games straight off, and he had er buy fo—fo—four bottles of wine. Shometimes I come home and make a fuss about er coal bills, but I won't never do it again. You can buy forty trucks of coal and I won't shay a word."

"Do you mean to tell me that you helped drink four bottles of wine this afternoon!" demanded Mrs. Bowser as she sprang up.

"Course I did. I beat ole fren' at billiards, you know, and ole fren' he had to buy four bottles of wine. Mishus Bowser, you orter be proud of a husband who can beat ole fren' at billiards seven times straight off."

The truth was out at last.

Mr. Bowser was in that condition known as "lively." His share of the four bottles had proved too much for him.

Never before had Mrs. Bowser seen him in that condition, and she didn't know whether to laugh or cry. As she stood looking him over he fell to weeping again and feelingly exclaimed:

"Mishus Bow—ow—owser, don't get rid of me. Be good to me and lemme shtay. If you will I'll see er ole fren' to-morrer and beat him sheventeen times straight off. Tell me you love me as I love you. Tell me—tell me——"

"I'll tell you to go to bed. Mr. Bowser, you are intoxicated!"

"Toxshicated? Toxshicated? How can I be toxshicated? I jest met er ole fren' and beat him seven games straight off. Mishus Bow—owser, zhat ain't being toxshicated. What er going to do?"

"Going to put you to bed."

"Puz me in my little bed? All rize—all rize. You my ole fren', you are. You shtick by me and I'll shtick by you. Whazever mazzer of floor, Mrs. Bowser? Keeps jumpin' up, you know.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" she said as she pushed and pulled by turns and got him upstairs at last.

"Had I? Had I?" he queried, as he sat on the floor. "Shay, now Mrs. Bowser, I met er ole fren', you know—ole fren'. Zhat ole fren' he shays—he shays——"

And then Mr. Bowser's head fell back on the pillow provided for it, and he knew no more. M. QUAD.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

NEXT WEEK: **"He Tries Horseback Exercise to Cure His Many Ailments."**

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# The Strange Story of Jean Joseph.

SILENCE fell upon the room at Dr. Bourgneuf's entrance—that silence well-known to frequenters of the assizes that hushes immediately alike the rustling of the briefs on the bench of the barristers and the murmured whisperings of the public.

The deposition of Dr. Bourgneuf would be the "nail" of the process. The people knew this and that at the fate of the accused was in the doctor's hands.

But the appearance of this witness at once reassured all the crowded audience, conscious of an inner shrinking against a responsibility so heavy in human hands.

At the call of the usher the doctor had advanced to the bar without even a glance for those eager assistants through whom the pronouncement of his name had sent a chill and stir of subdued excitement.

His scientific works were known to all; his spotless probity had passed into a proverb; and now that they saw him, his serious attention and simplicity, the gravity of his oath and manner, the firmness with which he faced the jury, as if utterly alone with them, without a gallery of crowded heads and listening ears to catch his lightest syllable, more than corroborated the pleasing impressions of Dr. Bourgneuf's character.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he began slowly—his whole deposition continued without hurry and with the same clear, precise utterance with which he spoke these opening words—"Gentlemen of the jury, I must ask permission to rehearse once more before you the story of this unhappy crime, the method, it seems to me, most favourable to the proper exposition and understanding of my own testimony.

"When selected by you to examine into the mental state of Jean Joseph, the criminal before us, I desired, if you remember, before giving my diagnosis to the public, to see and personally inspect the framing—nothing else so well expresses my meaning—that surrounded this crime. Why? Because numberless experiences have led me to believe, and to assert with conviction, that nothing so much and so quickly enlightens a physician as exact knowledge of the setting of a crime.

"I found, then, at the side of a desolate highway, fully half a mile from the village or other habitation, an ordinary country house standing in its own grounds. A casual inspection of the entrance doors and window shutters, which were adorned with a superfluity of bolts and iron bars and bells, convinced me at once that the occupant of this house had been of a timorous nature, who doubtless exaggerated the peril that the isolation of her dwelling compelled her to run.

"In the rooms of the house I made a still more detailed survey; everywhere finding a crowd of images, of statuettes, bearing upon or constituting objects of piety till one could readily have believed himself in the walls of a monastery.

"Indeed, the bedroom of Madame Piquet, as the murdered woman, I believe, was called, was so arranged as to perfectly resemble a Saint Joseph's chapel, pictures and figures of that holy saint tapestrying the walls and crowding the brackets, while twelve of the score of volumes lying upon bookshelves and tables were devoted to the life and virtues of that worthy man.

"I call your attention to this special form of devotion holding it, as I do, to be an important factor in this case, as showing the ascendency which the widow had been able to exercise over her domestic; the attic of the servant—to-day the assassin—showing an incumberment of ornament and literature precisely similar in religious character to that in the chamber of Joseph's mistress.

"These details and particulars gathered on the spot and from the lips of those who personally knew the widow Piquet lead me, keeping in mind the character of the deceased, to the following opinion:

"She was an emotional, exalted, and excitable person, whom the abuse of practical religion and the fear of the supernatural dragged into constant apprehensions of an origin clearly morbid.

"On the other hand, putting personal cowardliness out of the question, the dominant characteristics of the widow Piquet on all other points were energy, obstinacy, and inexorable despotism.

"Joseph, on the contrary, presents himself to us as a lad of natural docility, one of those plastic, characterless beings to whom education, good or bad, gives its only imprint.

"We cannot know or trace Joseph's hereditary traits, for the reason that he is a foundling taken from a public asylum by the Widow Piquet to bring up for domestic service. Nevertheless, all that I have been able to discover of the criminal's temperament shows a sensitive *nervosité*, exceedingly rare in a peasant, and which seems to have been fostered and increased by the fear in which Jean Joseph lived of displeasing his mistress and of exposing himself to her reprimands.

"Such was the reciprocal attitude of the Widow Piquet and her servant when one day, during the month of November last, something happened of which Jean Joseph, unskilled in the art of self-defence, has failed to apprise judge and jury, but which he has minutely and honestly described to me.

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"It was evening and at the close of dinner. Jean Joseph, who had dined facing his mistress, had risen to clear the table, when suddenly, in a tone of horror, Dame Piquet called him to return.

"'Hear this, Jean,' she cried, 'just hear this!'

"And from the columns of the journal she had spread out before her she read to him the details of an assassination of a woman by her servant.

"'The sheet trembled in her hands,' Jean Joseph told me in relating this incident, 'and as she read she constantly turned upon me a strange fixed gaze, seeking to judge of the effect produced upon me by the detailed recital. The article finished, seeing that still I did not speak, she turned to me with the demand to know what I thought about it.

"'"And his name, Jean," she continued, "what do you think it was?"

"'"I cannot divine, madame," said I.

"'"It was Jean—Joseph—the same as yours!"

"'She did not say another word and during the evening did not again address me a syllable, and when bedtime had come and she mounted to her chamber I heard her, contrary to her habit, close and lock her door with a double turn.'

"Gentlemen of the jury," pursued Dr. Bourgneuf, with a deliberation that dwelt upon and seemed to weigh every word, "this was the point of departure of the accomplished crime!

"As the result of that scene Jean Joseph in his turn ascended to his chamber and there passed a night of insomnia and reflection.

"'How,' he asked himself, 'had that other murderous servant been able to commit such a cowardly assassination of an aged woman who had sheltered and nourished him beneath her roof?'

"Step by step his excited fancy traced every circumstance of the crime. In the absence of precise details he invented and had recourse to comparisons; before long, for instance, placing the action of the crime into the framing of his own dwelling.

"It was himself whom now he saw upon the boards instead of the other murderer; himself and his benefactress, and he thought he heard outside his door the timorous step of the widow Piquet, come to turn upon him the key of his *mansarde*.

"He passed those night hours in a wakeful nightmare. He got up a murderer, and his gaze, which at the first morning encounter had sought that of his mistress, seemed to read in it a growing consciousness of his hideous thoughts that more and more unnerved him.

"Though no allusion was made to the reading of the previous evening, he felt the abyss that had suddenly opened between himself and Dame Piquet, and he no longer dared lift his eyes to her face in the terror of his suspicions.

"'Ah! the relief I should have experienced,' Jean Joseph has confessed to me, 'if only madame, my mistress, had given me an occasion to discuss the crime with her. It would have been a relief to both of us, and that which happened would not have come to pass. But it was not possible for me to speak of it to her first, because of the uneasiness of her eyes, which clung to me always, of her leaps and starts at the least brusque movement, of the atmosphere of fright and suppressed terror that perpetually hovered over the house. Time and again I longed to throw myself on my knees before her and cry aloud: "Swear to me, madame, swear to me that you do not believe me capable of—that!"

"'The fear that I read on her features strangled the cry in my throat, as the fear that I myself felt strangled all thoughts of flight—the fear of accusing myself if I did, as I had thought of doing, run away—of adding conviction to the belief of my mistress that her suspicions were in truth well founded, I remained. It was that which lost me!'

"Gentlemen of the jury, this existence of hallucination and madness with Jean Joseph endured a week. At the end of that time the two unfortunates talked to each other no more. They lived on the watch, facing each other, eye to eye, like beast enemies inclosed in the same cage and who spied upon each other before leaping to the end.

"It was the eighth day and after dinner, the time this thing had first begun, when Jean Joseph got up from his meal and went out to work in the woodhouse. Unable to sleep if he went to bed, he proposed to split wood, and through the fatigue of this rough duty to win the rest that for a week had fled his seeking.

"He had already sharpened his axe and was in the act of attacking with sturdy strokes a log of oak, when suddenly the sound of footsteps caught his ear in the courtyard. He stopped, listened, still with uplifted axe—the steps came nearer—close to the door, which now swung slowly back, and Dame Piquet, her clothes disordered as if preparing for bed, a lighted candle in her hand, stood shivering on the threshold.

"The shriek she uttered as the raised blade fell heavily upon her skull was heard by passing carters, truck farmers returning late from market; the voice was followed and Jean Joseph found, axe still in hand, bewildered and wild-eyed beside his bleeding victim!

"Gentlemen of the jury"—the doctor's tones had dropped lower and lower, till it seemed as if, perhaps, he did not wish the hall to hear his words—"Jean Joseph killed his mistress, as all of us know, but, heed well what I say to you now, it is the key to everything; Jean Joseph killed his mistress, yes, but killed her only because of that mistress' will!

"The dread and hallucination that led him to commit the deed, the dread and hallucination that constantly led her to suggest the deed, could end but in one way. If Jean Joseph is guilty of the murder of his mistress, he is guilty through obedience alone!

"Messieurs—decide the rest—I am done!"

N. Y. T.

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# On the Long Trail.

It was a proud day for Lorne, the young foreman of the Circle Bar ranch, when he started on his first "drive" with a herd of five thousand cattle for the shipping point. His orders were to take the herd to St. Louis, and pass through the Ozark mountains or foot hills.

The herd was tractable during the earlier days of the journey, but as the cattle went on they became more nervous, and it was with difficulty that the herders could keep them within the lines of the nightly round-up.

Once when they had been compelled to ride constantly round the herd from evening far into the night, Lorne went to the head of the herd to see what was the disturbing cause.

As he sat on his horse he heard the call of a wolf off to the right, answered by another from the left. Something about the sound was unnatural, and he listened closely. Again they came, and soon there was a second movement among the cattle—something had been thrown into the herd to startle them.

He knew then what was the matter—someone was annoying the herd to make him trouble. But when daylight came he could see nothing of the disturbers, and again he waited for night.

He took his own position far on the outskirts that night, and waited for developments. Soon there was another wolf call; then another, then a whizzing sound and another movement of the cattle. He rode furiously at the point where he thought the sound originated, and was not surprised to catch a glimpse of a dark form which he took to be a man on horseback,

"Halt!" he cried, "or I will shoot you!"

There was no stopping. Faster and faster he rode, and gained on his annoyer. Then, before he was aware of what was happening, he was seized from behind, and went rolling to the ground, a lariat coiled round him having jerked him from the saddle. It had not caught over his head, and his second assailiant went rushing past and away before he could regain his feet.

But not quick enough for the rider to escape notice, and one glance at the stooping shoulders and long hair told Lorne who it was—Louie, the Mexican, who had been discharged when Lorne went to work first on the Circle Bar.

But there was enough to look after at the other end of the line. The cattle, startled more than ever by the noise, had started on a stampede, and were racing towards the east at the top of their speed, the herders doing all in their power to stop them, but without effect.

The plan of the herders was to ride on the edge of the leaders of the herd, and by swerving them, eventually run the whole lot in a circle, so that it would tire itself out. Lorne joined in the ride, and fierce and fast was the racing for hours. All the time they were getting the herd into a "mill," which meant a constant turning, which might continue as long as strength lasted without damage. When this was accomplished Lorne went to the camp waggon and threw himself on a pile of blankets to rest.

It was two days before the herd was in shape to start on the journey again. On the second day they came back to the broad ribbon of brown earth that was spread over the green of the plain for four hundred miles, and was the first thoroughfare between the ranches of the south-west and the shipping station of the north.

Upon it were scores of herds, and it seemed likely that they would be allowed to proceed quietly and without molestation. They did not know the character of the young Mexican who was hanging on the edge of the herd.

Louie was not alone. He had taken with him another renegade from the south-west, and they were fertile in expedients to disturb the passage of the herd. The young foreman was unsuspicious.

"I believe, Jim," said he to the head herder, "that they have got discouraged and have left us."

"I don't know. It is never safe to trust a greaser unless he is dead," was the reply, "and then it is as well to take no chances."

So the watch was kept close, and day after day went by without incident. To be sure, a strange cry came from the side of the trail one night and caused the cattle to rouse quickly, but it did not amount to anything serious. Then there was a bundle of red cloth in the middle of the trail one afternoon round which the stock rushed and took a course a half-mile out of their way.

But on the whole the trip was going well, and they were up in the middle of the territory, with hopes of seeing the south branch of the Cimarron any day. A halt had been called early for the night, and on the level plain the cattle were scattered for two miles up and down the trail. The herders were getting supper, and only three were on guard.

None of them saw a crawling figure, leading a small pony, that crept across the herd's grazing ground, and slowly, without making the contented animals raise their heads suspiciously, separated the northern third of the herd from those on the south.

Steadily they drew away, and, as there were several hummocks in that region, were soon behind one, and

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out of sight of the regular herders. Lorne did not even see what had been done until one of the herders rode up to say that there was something wrong.

"The herd's short, somehow," he exclaimed.

In a moment the herders were in the saddles and the remainder of the cattle were being urged forward, for they knew that the lost stock had not been taken during the day, and consequently were not to the south, but must be to the north of the herd. It was almost sundown by this time, and he feared that the stock would escape him altogether if he waited for morning.

His fears on these grounds were unnecessary. Louie had no intention of stealing the stock. Every hoof was branded, and could not have been sold in any market. With his companion he had hurried the thousand head that he had led away from the main herd, and was already a mile or more up the trail preparing for a grand stroke that should give the Circle Bar man trouble.

On the long trail nothing causes so much annoyance and often great loss as the meeting of two herds. The cattle charge on each other, and frequently some lively fights ensue. More than that, there is almost sure to be a stampede, and when the two herds take opposite directions there is little chance for milling or controlling the frightened creatures.

So it happened that as the main herd went round the edge of the hillock, being pushed as fast as the excited men could hurry it, there came suddenly to meet it another herd, that was not for the moment recognised by Lorne and his followers.

Behind the thousand were two yelling men, Louie and his companion. The stock fought and the regular herders tried to separate the herds, not knowing that they belonged to each other. It was growing dusk, and the situation was a serious one.

Louie had gone to one side and was watching with satisfaction the *mêlée*. Suddenly the great mass of horns and swing tails gave a lurch in his direction and the stampede had commenced. Coming at him broadside, it gave him small chance to escape, and he put spurs to his horse and raced away to the south.

On came the herd, and then, to add to his peril, the trusty little pony stepped in a prairie dog hole and went sprawling on the sod with a broken leg. In an instant he was out of the saddle, but what could he do? The avalanche was coming.

Lorne, hurrying to the front, saw the herd start for the west and caught through the dusk a glimpse of a single horseman. Then he saw, too, the horse fall and fail to rise again. Forgetful of the herd, and only intent on saving the unfortunate herder, whoever it might be, he reined his pony in that direction.

As Lorne rode it was with the thought that the herder was one of his own men. He spurred at his best gait and was soon within a few yards of the unfortunate man. But the cattle were nearly as close, and it was even racing who would get there first.

Suddenly the young foreman recognised the man on foot and at the mercy of the herd—Louie. He was tempted to ride in another direction and save himself—something that he could not be sure of doing if he waited to take care of the meddler.

But the beseeching eyes of the Mexican were too much for him, and he slipped his left foot spur under the wide clinch that held the rear of the saddle. Then he prepared for leaning to the right, and called. "Get ready to jump there!"

Louie could not understand why his enemy should take chances of his own life to save one who had done him injury, but he was willing to be the saved one in the present condition of affairs.

Farther and farther Lorne leaned over to the right until he could almost sweep the long grasses with his hand. He had practised picking up a handkerchief while his horse was on the run, and the experiment came in handy at this time.

"Now—ready!" he called, and then, with a swoop, he went past.

The herd was but a dozen yards away and coming with heads down and tails in the air—a terrifying spectacle, and one that meant death to both the young men if they could not get out of the way.

But Lorne's strong arm and the broad clinch on the horse's flanks meant safety, and as the boy's arm went round the Mexican it held. On and on they went, Louie riding in the grasp of his rescuer, at the side of the flying animal, and Lorne breathing hard as he held the heavy burden, watching all the time for the herd, which was pressing on them.

But at last the pony dashed out of the line of pursuit and the herd went raging past. Louie dropped and went rolling over and over on the sod, while Lorne went on to the camp.

When at last Lorne and his men had gathered round the camp fire and were eating some of the cook's black bread, that seemed so good to the weary cowboys, a dark figure came stealing into the circle. It was Louie.

"I want the señor," he said timidly, and Lorne went out to him.

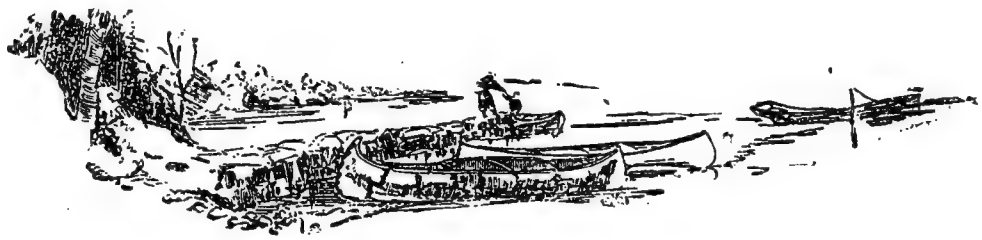
"You saved my life this afternoon," said the boy, in his broken dialect, impossible to reproduce in print.

"Well, I only did as I would for anyone."

"I know; but you are better than me. I make you loss and trouble. I am sorry. I like to help you now."

So the young Mexican joined the camp, and the next day took his place in the middle shift of the herders, and watched the cattle with all the care and fidelity of an old cowboy.

A. W. N.



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*New Serial Story.* *Begin it To-day.*

# EINAR OF THE LONG SWORD.

## By George C. Wallis . .

Author of "The Winning of Gunhild," "The Gladiator," etc., etc.

SUMMARY.

This story of the wooing of Astrid, the daughter of Earl Sweyn, is told by Sigmund, the Skald.

Einar Longsword and Hardrada Hardskull are both wishful to marry the maiden, who has been promised by her father to the latter, but Einar is told that he may proffer his suit if he captures the ship of Edred the Bearsark, a notorious pirate, within a year.

While Einar is on the voyage, Hardrada offends Sweyn, and is debarred from paying court to his daughter.

Einar first sets sail for North-hold, his own home, and on his arrival there finds that Edred has devastated it and that his parents have perished. He then starts out on his mission of vengeance, and after sailing for some time meets with Edred, whom he slays in the ensuing fight.

Hardrada, after leaving Raven's-nest, the home of Sewyn, sails for North-hold, hoping to find Einar there. On the voyage he falls in with Hrolf, Edred's son, and they agree to hunt Einar together. It is during a great storm that Hardrada and Hrolf come up with Einar. Fighting takes place, and Hrolf is thrown overboard by Einar and his ship destroyed. Hardrada, however, who took no part in the fight, manages to save Hrolf from drowning

### CHAPTER VIII.

#### The Hunting of Hrolf and Hardrada.

The *Eagle* was driven far out of the usual course of ships by the storm, and several days passed before she made land. She put in at last at Ostö, in the Skager Rack, and lay there until she was repaired, and fresh men taken aboard for those who had been lost in the storm-fight. As at Nidaros, there was no lack of volunteers, for Einar's fame was gone all down the coast, and it was esteemed an honour to be his man.

When she sailed again Einar had as stout and well-caulked a ship under him and as full and jovial a crew as ever he had taken to sea before.

After some days of fine sailing they met a trader, from whom they learned that a vessel in distress had been seen making for the Reyjane Islands not long before. Thither, not doubting that it was the mastless *Vulture*, Einar turned his keel.

"We can play no longer at a waiting game," said he to Algar. "The year speeds apace, and now that I have won Astrid she is much in my thoughts. A year is a long time, and much may happen in my absence, and as yet I have found no means to send her news of my doings, though it seems they are well-known down here in the south. Next time we see Hardrada must be the last, Algar Erikson."

"I trust so," said Algar, "but he is a wary customer, and I like not that were-man of his, Alfdane. Having tasted the sharpness of our teeth they will be the less keen for another bite until they can catch us napping and do the biting themselves. This is my view, that Hardrada will run from us if he can, thinking to keep us at sea until the year be out."

"Then we must be hot on his track," said Einar. "He has yet to show us that he has the swiftest ship. I wish I had got the *Destroyer* under me now, but it would be ill to risk her out here. Old Sweyn is well-named the Stern, and if I do not fulfil my vow to the letter, he will not give me Astrid without more trouble."

So they made all speed that wind and tide would let them to the Reyjanes; but when they landed there Algar's rede came true. The *Vulture* had been, and rigged new masts, but had sailed the moment she was seaworthy again. The islanders did not know where to, except that she seemed to be aiming north. When questioned about her crew, an old fisherman answered that they seemed to be a full company, and that there were three champions amongst them who wore the golden wings.

"Now, who can the third be?" said Einar wonderingly. "Except Hardrada and his man Swerkur, I know of none who should wear the wings. Alfdane was a deedless man, with only a steel cap. What kind of men were the three, fisherman?"

"One was tall and bony, with a villainous face," said the man. "The second was a grizzled Viking, but cheery withal, and the third was a young man of about your own age, Earl, as much like Edred the Bearsark—whom I have seen twice—as ever one man is like another."

"Hrolf Red-hand, by Odin!" cried Algar. "Then even Rana herself has refused him! 'Tis well, for he will live to regret the day. We have no time to waste here."

The Vikings ran down the shore to the ship at once, and leaving the fishermen staring astonished in the village street, sprang aboard in haste and headed north.

Now Algar had guessed rightly how Hardrada would act, but did not know the depth of Alfdane's witchcraft. The were-man was busy with spells and incantations as the *Vulture* sped through the sea, and his familiar told him at times where the *Eagle* was, and sent dreams at his bidding to Einar's mind, so that the latter steered the ship where he should not have done. Sometimes Einar fought against the strange thoughts that moved him, but the spells of the troll were powerful and conquered. In Iceland Hardrada had kin and lands, and thither, from the Westman Isles, his ship fared, the *Eagle* labouring three days behind. Hardrada's track was plain amongst the islands by the work of sword and flame he left where the people had not been hospitable enough; and at every fresh evidence of this needless ravage Einar's face was set the harder and his men swore the louder, and Algar vowed deeper vengeance.

The summer days were yet warm, the flowers were still blooming everywhere, the land yet smiled green and glorious to the face of Frey, when Einar reached Iceland and came to where Hardrada had taken up fresh men; this time but a day too late. Algar was furious, and he and the men were for sacking the place for revenge before they sailed again. Einar would not hear of it.

"I will have no needless slaughter on my hands," said he decisively. "I have no quarrel with these folk, who have done me no harm. Put out to sea again and sail south; we cannot be far behind Hardskull now."

They voyaged forth again, and to make a long tale short, came after many weary days to one of the Faroe Isles, landing there late in the afternoon of the same day that Hardrada had left it in the morning. They would have put out again at once, but the last run had been a long one and the ship was short of water, and one man sick and needed help. Also it was growing dusk, and Einar was full of thoughts regarding Astrid, and weary of sailing, and half-

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minded to give up the search and fare back to Ravensnest to claim his love. And the folks were very friendly.

Now, this was the cunning of Alfdane. He had led them to this anchorage, where the people were hospitable, after a long and weary search, thus making sure that they would stay awhile and so fall into the trap he had set.

Not far from the landing-place was a temple to Odin, and not far from the temple was the garth of Borg Skiggison, who had made Hardrada welcome on his short stay.

Thither went Einar and his men, and old Borg, who had long left the sea and now spent his time listening to the boasting of the young Vikings who passed his way, bade them come in and rest awhile. His wife Sishild at once made stir to wait on the guests, and while they were putting away from them the desire for food his daughter Thora came in and sang them greeting. Hardrada's men had not rested there with idle tongues, and all on the island knew by now something of Einar's fame and the feuds that were between Einar and Hardrada on the one hand Hrolf and Einar on the other. However, old Borg said he took no man's part now, having done enough in his own day, and Alfdane had been very quiet with his own plot. So Thora sang:

Welcome to Borg's-hold,
Einar the Wonder,
Einar the Longsword,
Fighter in thunder.
Welcome to Fareys,
To peace and to rest,
After your sailing
O'er ocean's white crest.
Welcome to Borg's-hold
As long as thou'lt stay,
And kind be the thoughts
Thou wilt take away!

She was tall and fair as a lily and her voice soft and sweet, and the men cheered long and lustily when she had done, and even Einar smiled. He thought he had never heard a voice so like Astrid's, nor seen a woman who came so near being as fair. And that night the ale was good and men merry round the long tables in Borg's lofty hall. And Algar Erikson, when he had drained the ale-horn many times, spoke more than was well, telling of Einar's love and of his vow.

There was high revel and loud mirth till far into the night, and, after the women had retired from the hall, merriment of none too prudish a sort. At length, as the red logs flickered, and sank together, dying on the hearth-stone, the guests and the house-folk alike fell asleep, some beneath the tables, some upon their folded arms, some leaning back against the wall. The days of voyaging had been many, and full of hard work and fast following disappointments, and what wonder that Einar's men fell an easy prey to the soft glamour of Thora's songs and the good quality of Borg's beer?

The first to wake in the morning was Einar, and the sun was already stabbing the twilight of the hall with lances of light when he opened his eyes and roused himself. Close to him old Borg lay snoring, and not far off his own man Algar.

"We were over-worshipful of Bragi last night," said Einar to himself. "But no harm's done. Yet my mother Gunhild said that folk who truly believed in the White Christ did not thus. . . . I will go out and get the morning air alone."

Down to the water's edge went Einar, the fresh breeze playing tricks with his curly golden hair as he strode along, his helmet swinging in his hand. Not far from the landing-stage there was a rounded rock jutting into the sea, and on this, her bare feet splashing the low water on the shingle, sat Thora, looking wondrous fair. The sunshine lay warm upon the light locks that escaped from her snowy coif, her arms shone white and firm beneath her fluttering robe, and there was something in her blue eyes that Einar could not understand, but which he could not help admire.

"Greeting, Einar Haraldson," said she softly, when she saw him, "It is a fair morning when the brave are up so early."

"I was never a laggard," said Einar, "but this time Strength is beaten by Beauty. Perhaps it is well that I have not spared more sleep, for who knows what voyage is before us to-day?"

"Surely you will not leave us so soon, Einar?" asked Thora, with a very pretty air of concern. "Surely Borg's-hold is a pleasant place, and vengeance can wait a while? And your Astrid is sure for you whenever you choose to sail!"

Down to the water's edge went Einar, where Thora was seated on a rock.

And Thora gave a little sigh, and looked at the Viking with a swift flash of the eyes that was very flattering.

"There is wisdom in your words, Thora," he said, and gazed out across the water, thinking.

This was Einar's fault—that he could not bring himself to believe evil of fair faces. Yet often fair faces are but masks for crooked minds, and sometimes the minds are the more crooked the fairer are the faces that mask them.

Thora was fair, yet she was false. She had fey gifts and a dark heart, and had before this time lured many men to their deaths for gain. And she had taken golden presents from Hardrada.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE TREACHERY OF THORA THE FAIR.

"YES, there is wisdom in your words, Thora," said Einar. "The voyage has been long and fruitless and the year is going fast. Perhaps it will be better if I stay another day and rest and then go to claim Astrid, putting off revenge till after. It must be Baldur who has led us here, so fair a place it is. Yet I cannot stay after to-morrow's dawn, the sea is treacherous these days."

"So it is," quoth Thora, a gleam of triumph coming into her bright eyes. "And on other days beside. And so are men's promises and women's smiles. But see, the swallows fly high; it will be fine weather for your stay."

And then she sprang off the rock and walked with Einar

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along the shore, talking of everyday affairs until they came back at last to the threshold of the house. But with her hand uplifted to the latch she said swift and low:

"If you are weary of the drinking and merriment this even, Einar, come with me to our guest chamber, which overlooks the sea. I would fain talk more with you, and also, I should like to read to runes that are graven on your sword. The carline Unna will wait upon us."

And he, thinking no evil, promised to be with her after sundown. That day they looked to the ship and cleaned their armour and weapons of the salt-rust that was on them, the men being nothing loth for a good excuse to linger at the island, and when the sun hung low and red over the western sea, all sat round the tables to a glorious feast.

Old Borg was wealthy, having much land and many cattle, and nothing liked he better than to see the ale flow and the boards groan under the weight of good food; to hear the rattle of daggers on the dishes and the wagging of loosened tongues; to see the faces of his guests grow warm with mirth in the leaping glare of the pine logs that roared and crackled on the hearth. And Einar's men were a jovial company, full of stories and full of recent experience, and never was so eloquent a boaster as Algar Erikson when the ale-horns were empty and the thralls were sent to broach a fresh cask.

"'Twas Loki's own luck that brought us here!" he cried, pledging Borg in a deep draught; "but 'tis Bragi that's keeping us. Next to Thor, Bragi's my god. Let us drink to them—Bragi and Thor—to Joy and Courage, Pleasure and Power!"

The men drank the pledge heartily, the house-carles at the door beat with their swords upon their shields, and the house shook with shouts.

So intent were all now on what was before them, that none noticed Einar's absence. He remembered Thora's wish and went up to the guest-chamber, taking his sword, but leaving his axe in the great hall.

Unna brought them wine that a wandering Viking had brought from the far South a year ago, and, having set it before them, retired.

While the twilight lasted it was a pleasant view that Thora and Einar had from the casement. They saw the deepening of the darkness over the sea, the drifting of the night clouds, the shining forth of the stars in the sky. And Thora spoke little, seeming pensive and thoughtful, and Einar sat full of content, dwelling on the love of Astrid and the words she had spoken to him by the water's edge that morning she and I had bidden him *vale*.

Then as the night came, and Unna brought lamps and set them in brazen sockets on the wall and their light glittering on the golden wings of Einar's helm was reflected into Thora's eyes, the warrior and the maiden drew closer together; and the maiden spoke of love, and sighed often, and gave Einar to see, if he would have seen, how dear he was to her. For awhile, however, he answered her absent-mindedly, and would not see how it was.

Now as the time for her treachery drew on, Thora became anxious and hesitated. She had undertaken the task lightly enough before she had seen Einar, but now she had seen him and spoken to him, her heart pained her. Seeking to entrap him, she had herself fallen a victim to the snare. She loved him as she had never loved before, and towards him her cold, dark mind was soft and warm. She had but to warn him, and he would be safe—safe, to go to Astrid.

At that thought she hardened, but softened again, thinking to win his love. He had praised her songs and seemed content in her presence. Perchance he regretted that he was bound to Astrid the Beautiful? She resolved to try him before she gave him to his fate. "At least I *may* win," thought she, "and if not, then shall no other."

So she talked of love and of the perversity of fate, and after awhile Einar felt how the wind blew, and looking at her face, was troubled. Yet he would not acknowledge that he knew, caring only to think in that way of Astrid, whose trust he might not break.

"Bliud Hödr does things as he will, having no concern for men," said he. "Hearts may be hurt and seared, but he stays not his hands of destiny. 'Tis our best plan to face all fortune, good or ill, with an equal mind, for what we cannot help must be endured."

"That is true, Einar; but is it not also true that sometimes we have our fate in our own hands? For you, Einar, even now I can read much blood and sorrow in the future, if you persist in this feud and in returning to Astrid—who has doubtless grown tired of waiting. Yet you are not forced to go; the choice lies in your own hands. Stay here with us in peace, where love may wait for you without any struggle to win it—love that is, perhaps, deeper than you will find if you search the world over."

"I have given my word to go back," said Einar, strangely moved by the steady regard of her melting eyes. "How can I be a traitor?"

"That you can never be, Einar; you are too brave and noble," said Thora. "But I have great skill in these things, and if you will stay with us, it shall be made to seem to those you have left that you could do nothing else. Surely Borg's-hold is pleasant, and love that cannot keep silence not to be despised? And am I not fair, viking?"

"Yes," said Einar. "And you must be fey, too, to make the saying of what I must say so hard. I cannot forsake Astrid, not even for you. I must sail hence to-morrow, grieve you as it may. We cannot choose our fates, despite your philosophy, Thora. But I shall always remember you, and I trust that sometimes we may meet again and be friends. This I will say, that, had I never seen Astrid, it might have been as you wish."

"Is this Astrid so beautiful, then, and so dear to you?" asked Thora in a low voice, drawing away from him."

"So dear that, not for my life's sake, would I be untrue to her," said Einar.

For a moment Thora fixed her eyes upon him with a gaze that seemed to pierce to his soul, but under which he did not waver, then she rose and took one of the lamps from its socket and drew aside the curtains of the casement, and placed it on the ledge without, so that its light shone as a faint star over the sea.

"Why do you set that lamp there?" asked Einar.

"To guide any seafarers who may happen to have lost their way," said the maiden. "I forgot, or it should have been there sooner. It may lead some wanderers here to-night, calm though the sea is, and there is welcome for all. Now Unna shall bring us more wine, and then I will leave you."

The carline brought in the flagon, and Thora's white hands poured the red liquid into the drinking-cups. Einar thought the hands passing shapely, but did not see, in the uncertain glimmer of the remaining lamp that Thora shook a dark powder from a tiny phial into the cup that she gave to him. He drank, thinking that the wine had a very sweet taste, and whilst he leaned back lazily upon the couch, Thora's deft tongue ran on.

She seemed in no haste to be gone, though she said no more of her desire, and noted with satisfaction how silent Einar was, and how his eyelids slowly drooped. Ever and anon she went to the window and glanced out at the sea.

Einar felt drowsy, but could not rouse himself. The scent of the drugged wine rose to his brain; the talk of Thora was like the soothing murmur of mountain streams; the restless tiding of the sea on the shingles pleasant to hear. In the great hall the voices were growing fewer, and those few thicker and fainter. He was drifting into an unnatural sleep. Then Thora came back from the window, bringing the lamp in again. She had seen, far out on the ocean, a waving flash of fire, and knew that she was giving Einar to his fate. Yet so handsome he looked when the glow of the two lamps shone upon his noble face and the

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curls of his golden hair, that she shook him gently, and bent and said:

"It is not yet too late, Einar Haraldson. Yet you may have me instead of Astrid. Say quickly which it shall be."

Einar heard her but faintly, saw her anxious face but dimly, as a man in a dream, and only half understood her words. But he caught his love's name, and murmuring it twice—"*Astrid, Astrid!*"—fell asleep.

Thora watched by him awhile, then started up as she heard the sound of oars on the water and the low, grating noise of a boat being carefully beached. Deftly unfastening

Einar, murmuring "Astrid, Astrid," fell asleep.

Longsword from Einar's belt, she bore it, sheath and all, to her own bower.

"At any rate, that shall be mine!" she said to herself.

She came back once more and kissed his unconscious lips, then went out again. As the curtain fell behind her, there came a hammering and crashing at the great door below, and then the shouts of men and the clash of steel. With flushed cheeks she ran to the inner door of the hall and looked within.

Hardrada Hardskull was there, swinging his axe, and with him Swerkur and Hrolf Red-hand, and behind them came crowding the men of the *Vulture*. The were-man, Alfdane, stood without, not liking a fight in the semi-darkness.

The work was sharp and short. More than half of Einar's men were too drunken to be roused—and Algar was amongst those—and those who woke and seized weapons hastily were too surprised and dazed to offer a long resistance. They struck out wildly, not knowing friend from foe, and were soon overpowered.

Borg's men, being dressed as for peace, were easily distinguished from them, and though some got hard knocks in the rough fray, none were killed. It was no part of Hardrada's plan to have a feud with Borg—who lay near Algar, oblivious to all—by doing more slaying than could be helped, so long as he had Einar safe. When the fight was over, and Thora and Unna and Sishild brought lamps, he turned to Thora and said, so that all might hear:

"It is a rough return for your hospitality, maiden, but 'tis not so bad as it might have been, and now we have mastered the sober ones, we will leave you the rest, saving Einar only, and this sot, Algar Erikson."

"The one is as bad as the other," cried Thora. "Einar sits in the guest chamber, drunk with our best wine, over which he fell asleep making love to me!"

"That will be good news for Astrid the Beautiful," said Alfdane, who was now at his master's side. "I long to be on my journey."

"You shall not wait, troll," said Hardskull. "When we have netted our bird and emptied these tables, we will be off, and dawn should find us far on the sea. If Borg wakes he may be troublesome, and there is no sport fighting an old grey dog whose teeth are blunt."

So they went in and bound Einar fast with strong cords, and then Algar; and having made a good meal and given Thora more gold secretly, Hardrada went back to the ships with his prisoners, well pleased with the night's work and in high spirits for the future. It was yet quite dark when the *Vulture* put out to sea again, followed by the *Eagle*, on which a working crew was placed, and the rise of the sun came when they were out of sight of land.

But in the hurry and excitement, Hardrada had forgotten to look or to ask for Einar's axe and sword, and his men had not bound Algar very securely. The two prisoners lay in the poop-cabin, the door of which was swinging to and fro with the rolling of the galley, and so elated were the crew over their success that none of them took the trouble to look within. The motion and the noise of the sea air, however, woke Algar, though Einar was past rousing for some time to come, and the feeling of the cords sobered him at once. He broke one of the bonds easily, and slipped out of the rest after some patient effort, then crept to the door and peered out.

He had not to listen long to what was being said to know on whose ship he was and how he came there, though it was too dark to see much, and after a vain attempt to wake Einar, he did not hesitate over his course of action. He must jump overboard and swim back to the island before the distance grew too far—he knew that it was no short swim already—and by some means get possession of old Borg's ship, and follow Hardskull to his lair.

Several of the Vikings heard the splash of his dive, and a moment later his escape was discovered, and some arrows and spears sent after him into the darkness. But the ship had a good way on, and they judged it too far from land for a man to reach it alive, so Hrolf said:

"Let the sot die in Rana's arms. It will save us the trouble of putting Odin's mark on a nithing who forsakes his friend!"

So the ships sped on, steering for Strongness. On the second day they parted, Alfdane, with the *Eagle* turning north. When he came to the fiord that runs up into the land past Raven's-nest, he put in there. The galley was looking very battle-worn and sea-tried, and as they came to the landing-place Alfdane sent most of his men below and went to the helm alone.

## CHAPTER X.

### The Fire on the Fiord.

Now when Kolbi the thrall ran to tell us of the solitary ship in the fiord I at once went down to the water side, for visitors had of late been few. Astrid came with me, and

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little Arvak, who was growing a very sturdy youth, and several of the house-folk.

When we first saw the vessel she was creeping slowly out of the shadow of the lower cliffs into the full glow of the open, and when the sun's rays glittered on her figure-head we saw that she was the *Eagle*, Einar Haraldson's ship. Astrid gave a start, and a cry of glad surprise; but, as the ship came nearer said, with a catch of fear in her voice:

"It is strange, Sigmund, but her shields are few, and she comes slowly because there are also few rowers. And the man on the forecastle seems neither so tall nor so stalwart as was Einar when last we saw him. Odin grant that no harm has befallen him."

"You are a Norseman's daughter, Astrid," said I, also fearing evil. "You will know how to meet sorrow if it comes; but till the tale is told it is folly to let it grieve us. The man is not Einar, I am sure, but there is something familiar about him even at this distance. We must wait and see."

We were silent then until the galley came to hailing distance, and when the man called to us I knew him at once and marvelled why I had not recognised him before. It was Alfdane, Hardrada's man, and when Astrid heard his name her face turned as deathly pale as the dying glimmer of the northern lights across the snowfields.

My hand was on my dagger as Alfdane sprang to shore, for I feared treachery from the first. He laughed loudly at my care, and smiled insolently at Astrid, and cried:

"Your teeth are not so sharp, skald, that you need think to scare me by showing them, though, by Tyr, you make a good watch-dog. 'Twould have been good news for Einar your care of his fair one."

"Why 'would have been'?" asked Astrid. "What news have you of him?"

"News that will keep till we get to Raven's-nest Hall," said Alfdane. "It is a matter for Sweyn to hear as soon as any man."

Having no quarrel with him, and cursing my physical weakness as I went, I turned about with the others and we all went up to the house, Alfdane and his few men, after anchoring the *Eagle*, following us. The hall was well filled with folk, and when Earl Sweyn had bidden Alfdane greeting, with a scowl on his face that belied his words, all were eager to hear what was to be told.

But Alfdane drank much ale before he would speak, taking delight in our anxiety, and not until he saw that he had driven Sweyn the stern to the limit of his patience did he put down his cup and tell us the story agreed upon between Hardrada and himself.

"It will seem strange that I alone am returned, and in the *Eagle*," said he, "but 'tis none of my work. It is the doing of Hödr, and no man can stand against the arm of Fate. If no traders have been this way of late you will not have heard of Einar's doings before he fell in with my master. He has slain Edred the Bearsark in fair fight and taken his ship, and since then, having seen the work that we did at North-hold, has been in search of us. A few days ago we met him at one of the Fareys, and took him a prisoner, together with his man, Algar. Brun the Silent has been silent in death some months now."

At the news that Einar had fulfilled his vow a smile came to old Sweyn's face and a flash of light to Astrid's eyes, and from the men of the homestead a great shout of praise. But at the other tidings a spell of silence fell upon us.

"That is a were-man's word," said I at last scornfully. "No man like your master ever conquered Einar Longsword in fair fight. If he is a prisoner there has been foul work done—nithing's work."

"Not so fast, Sigmund the Skald, not so fast," said Alfdane mockingly. "It was not in open fight, truly, yet it was no more advantage than one man may take of another. We heard of him at the island and that he was seeking us, and, being a large crew, put in boldly to meet him. Though it was night when we got there we landed and broke in the door of the hold where he was guest. We were ready for a stern fight, but so many of his men were asleep with drink that we had little enough to do. Einar himself we took without a blow, for he lay fast asleep in the bower of Borg's daughter, Thora."

"Now we know you speak untruth!" cried Astrid, springing to her feet, her eyes flashing; "now we know what your tale is worth, Alfdane! Go tell that somewhere where Einar is not known!"

"Peace, child," said Sweyn. "Let him be done before you grow so furious. Men are but men after all where fair faces are concerned, and such things have been before to-day."

"'Tis well said, Earl," Alfdane replied. "And when a man is great as Einar and a maiden beautiful as Thora one must look for like doings. But I know nothing beyond what I saw and heard. It was Thora herself who led us to him, to save her father's life, and with my own eyes I saw him asleep, an empty wine-flagon at his side. We bound him and took him on board the *Vulture*, which sailed at once. With these few men I came hither in the *Eagle* to ask the hand of Astrid for Hardrada; or, if that be not granted, to offer other terms."

Astrid was now still, for the tale bore some mark of truth—it was, indeed, part true, and therefore the worst of lies—but old Sweyn's brow hardened.

"You can tell Hardrada Hardskull," said he, "that my word is my word, and having given Astrid to Einar on conditions which he has almost fulfilled, I cannot go back on the promise. Hardskull is no longer a friend of mine, and his doings at North-hold have broken all contracts between us. What else have you to say?"

"He bade me say, expecting your answer to the first, that as a second alternative he will go holmgang with Einar, and the victor shall have Astrid. But that all may be fair Astrid herself must see the fight and be ready to wed the winner as soon as it be over. And I should tell you that there is now with us Hrolf Red-Hand, son of Edred, who will challenge Einar should my master fall. So Einar will have two fights to endure at the best, and this Hrolf is a very strong man."

"Nor do I like this," said Sweyn.

"Then Astrid may bid farewell to Einar," said Alfdane, "for if neither of these offers be taken his life is at once forfeit to Hrolf. And prisoners are easily hastened to Valhall. Sacrifices can be made to Thor."

Now we were all speechless but old Sweyn. He was named "the Stern" for this: that nothing could so fix him in a resolve as thwarting or hindrance. Alfdane's words could not have been worse chosen.

"That is as it may befall, Were-Hound," he said, breaking the peace-bands from his sword and unsheathing it as he spoke. "Sometimes the hound bays a different tune when the deer are run down and desperate. Hardrada Hardskull need not think his head so thick that it is axe and sword-proof, nor that my arm is yet too weak to use either, nor that the killing-trick has gone from my memory. After such a message as you bring I declare him my enemy. There is were-gild between me and him because Astrid, my daughter, is now Einar's promised wife, and his father and mother were my friends.

"Go tell him that, Were-Hound, and say that Sweyn's ships are behind you, and Sweyn's sword will soon be in his throat. And tell him that even if he escapes me both he and Hrolf and all their men shall be outlawed and hunted down without mercy. And, last of all, tell him that you are lucky to get out of Raven's-nest at all, and would not but that you were made welcome before you told your tale. On this blade I vow, by Odin, that what I have said I will not unsay for any man. Now go."

For a moment Alfdane's face reddened, for the gaze of all was upon him; then he laughed a soft, cunning laugh that was never heard from an honest man, and said:

"You were ever a man of your word, and noted for

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hospitality, Earl Sweyn. You cannot do much less than let me go, for I am only a bearer of news, a carrier of a message. It is with Hardrada you must deal. But my men are sea-weary, and so am I, and we would ask to stay the night over. The wind is rough, with threat of wild weather after sunset, and by morning it may be blown over. Whenever I go I can take your word, and Einar is safe whilst I am here."

This old Sweyn could not well refuse, nor could any of us find objection, so Alfdane sat down again and made pretence to be jovial; but I noticed that he drank very little more ale, his men following his example, though some of our folk were worse for what was in them.

With the night came a howling wind that shook the house and woke me several times out of a troubled sleep. The last time I opened my eyes was in the dense darkness that comes just before the show of dawn, and as I lay awake, staring into the blackness around me, a faint scent of burning wood was borne on the wind that whistled through the crevices.

I sat up at once, full of suspicion and thinking of Alfdane, but so loud roared the gale without that I could distinguish no sound in the house save the regular breathing of the men around me. And then, as I heard the wind change its dull roar to a shrill shriek as a fresh eddy caught the gable of of the house, the scent of burning went away altogether.

"It comes from outside, thanks to the All-Father," I said to myself, "but, nevertheless, I will go and seek for it."

I was ever a wakeful bird in the early hours. Groping my way cautiously to the back of the house so that none might be disturbed, I came to a window that I knew to be unsecured. Twice as I groped along the same faint smell of burning reached me, and when I put hand on the latch of the lattice I saw that the sky was red with a strange flickering glow.

At first I thought it was the northern lights, and wriggled through the opening without more ado, but when I stood outside and could see the sky well, I knew better. The glare was a reflection from a vivid fire towards the south, from over the cliffs by the fiord. It was no work of the gods that glare; it was cast by a fire of man's making on or near the silent fiord.

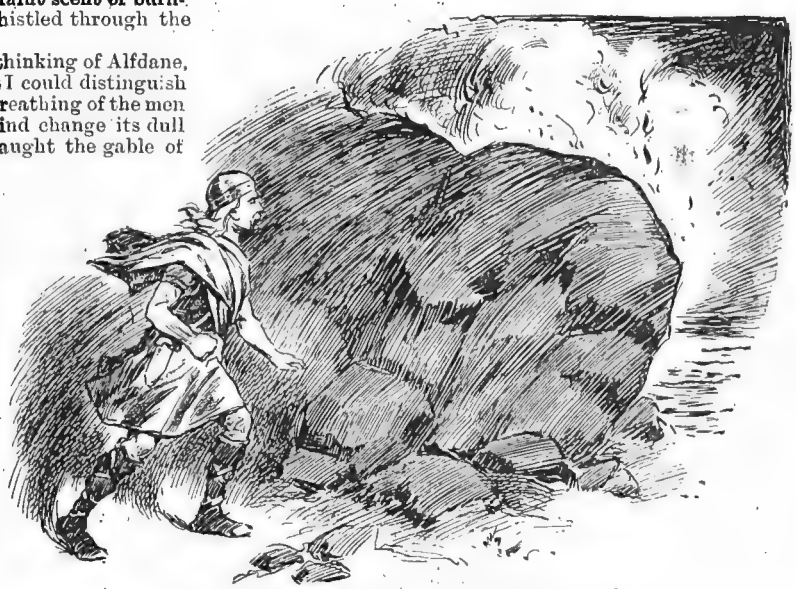
Turning to give one glance at the house, which stood dark, grim, and seemingly lifeless behind, I ran along the garth by the bridle-path that goes down to the landing-stage.

As yet there was no rain, but the gale was so fierce and gusty that owing to my weakness I could in some places scarcely keep my feet, and it was some time before I drew within sight of the landing-stage. Before then, however, there was no doubt that something was on fire. Showers of sparks shot up from behind the rock that hid the fiord, and were whirled hither and thither in starry streams, and now and then the tongue of a huge flame would leap into view, linger a moment, and die down as swiftly as it came. And when the wind blew directly towards me I smelt burning wood, and heard the ominous crackle and roar of its consuming.

Before I came to the end of the rock I feared the worst and was prepared for what I saw. I saw three ships adrift on the fiord, blazing furiously. They were all dry, and in the dry, clear air, fanned by the shrieking gale, the fire had got hold of them beyond all hope. Even if they could have been reached they were past saving, for all the boats were gone from the shore. And the thing that confirmed my worst fears was that there were three ships only. The *Eagle* was gone, and so, doubtless, were Alfdane and his crew, and this was his doing.

Now when I had been standing there awhile, stupefied by my helplessness and loneliness in the night, and watching the changing glare of the fires on the cliffs and on the still-flowing water, I bethought me of Astrid, and knew the reason of it all. Alfdane's peaceable offer and sudden submission after Sweyn's expressed contempt were only excuses to gain time. He had been sent to bring Astrid away, and failing fair means had used foul. It was a master-trick to sail off and leave our ships and boats burning.

Full of this thought and of furious anger, I went back, the wind behind me now, but before I reached the great hall I saw lights within it and moving figures in the home patch. The scent of fire had roused others. The whole household was up, and it was not long before I had told what I knew and feared, and some were running down to the water, and Sweyn and Alfifa were searching for Astrid.



Showers of sparks shot up from behind the rock.

But presently those who went out came back again, saying that it was useless to try to save the ships, which were almost burnt to the sea-line, and the old Earl came into the hall, reviling the gods with language terrible to hear. Astrid was gone; she had been seized in her sleep, for there was no sign of a struggle, and Alfdane and all his men were missing. The great outer door, closed but unfastened, told us an eloquent tale.

When the sun was well risen and all shone white and glittering with the mantle that the early frost had left, the wind-storm increased in violence. It swept down the valley so fiercely that it was a hard thing to walk erect against it, and its coldness was like the prick of a sharp spear on the skin.

I stood in the shelter of the lee gable with some of the carles when all talking was done and silent despair sat on all faces, looking up the valley to where the bridle path over Saddleback Ridge turns out of sight to the left hand, and suddenly I remembered that it was not a half-day's ride to Trollfell, where Othnar Wolf'sfang's house was. Then I bethought me that I, Sigmund the Skald, who had sung the praises of so many men, might yet do a deed worthy to be remembered after the Hell-shoes are bound upon my feet. And, full of this resolve, I went quietly into the hall.

*(To be continued.)*

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# SHORT STORIES ABOUT CATS.

**We devote, every week, two pages of *Short Stories* to pithy, humourous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a copy of "A Broken Promise," by Violet Whyte, to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case the source *must* be stated. The prize of One Guinea offered for the best Storyette in this competition has been won this week by Mr. D. Ryan, Jun., of 16 Crow Street, Dublin. Attempts for this week's prize must deal with FUNNY STORIES ABOUT NEGROES, and must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, July 9th. Post-cards only, please.**

## Almost Human.

THE other day, having occasion to go down to the kitchen for something or other, I saw an undoubtedly very clever piece of roguery performed by our cat.

The kitchen door was open, and I could see what was going on as I came down the stairs. The cat was on the kitchen table making her way through a piece of meat intended for dinner, and her offspring—a young kitten—was reposing peaceably in a box-bed by the fire.

Hearing my footsteps on the stairs, the cat leapt from the table, ran to the box, took the kitten in her mouth, and having deposited it beside the half-gnawed joint, got into the kitten's bed, and coiling herself up, presented the appearance of the most innocent tabby on earth.

D. R.

## Why They Wanted It.

Two neighbours had a long litigation about a cat, which they both claimed. The judge, wearied out with the case, at last said:

"What is the use of making so much fuss about a little cat?"

"Your honour will see the serious nature of the case," replied one of the lawyers, "when I inform you that the parties are both sausage makers."

The roar of laughter which followed proved that the entire court saw the point.

J. M.

## Educating Barnum.

WHEN the late P. J. Barnum was in San Francisco, he advertised for a cherry-coloured cat.

An Irishman answered the advertisement, and offered to bring him a fine cherry-coloured pussy for three dollars. Barnum was so delighted that he sent the man the money at once, in order to hold him to his bargain.

But his delight changed to unmitigated disgust when Pat came and jerked a wall-eyed, sickly-looking black cat out of the bag, and told him that its name was Billy, and that it was very fond of fish.

"What do you mean by bringing me this thing?" yelled Barnum. "Didn't you say you had a cherry-coloured cat?"

"I did that, Mr. Barnum," said the Irishman, "and didn't Oi bring yer wan? Didn't ye iver ate black cherries?"

The great showman smiled a sickly smile as he muttered:

"Done, by thunder!"

C. R. F.

## Mr. Bowser's Cat.

MRS. BOWSER: "I say, my dear, that cat is a nuisance, we must get rid of it. It killed the canary this morning. I asked Mrs. Suburb if she would like to have it this morning, and she said she wouldn't have it if every hair on its whiskers hung with diamonds."

Mr. Bowser: "That's just like you women. The way to get rid of that cat is to advertise it in the papers, and put a price on it, say £10. Nobody will have it for nothing." (And Mr. Bowser was right for once. The cat brought £3 10s. But it came back to him again. He says he knows now how to make money.)

J. M.

## A Contretemps.

AN amusing incident was recently witnessed in Scotland during a performance of *The Middleman*.

Playgoers will recollect how Cyrus works at midnight, firing up the furnace till it is at a tremendous heat, and how the flames glow. At last, when he thinks the pottery is sufficiently fired, he allows the furnace to cool down. Then, in his eagerness to see the result of his work, he begins to pull down the bricks before the oven is really cool.

The delight of the audience may be imagined when from the blazing interior suddenly jumped one of the theatre tabbies.

W. J. B.

## Didn't Know, But——

A CERTAIN gentleman's garden was by no means improved by the nocturnal visits of the neighbours' cats, and the sufferer had been heard to declare that it would go hard with the first feline trespasser he laid hands on.

One morning a neighbour, who owned a lost pussy, called on the owner of the garden.

"Have you seen my cat, Mr. X.?" she asked.

"Scores of times, madam," was the reply.

"Yes, yes; but you've killed him, haven't you?"

"My dear madam," replied X. cautiously, "your cat was a constant and unwelcome visitor, along with scores of others. If he came with the crowd he took his chance. Perhaps I slew your pussy, perhaps not. That is for you to prove."

With this the lady was by no means satisfied, and on the following morning she waited for Mr. X.'s six-year-old son. Giving the youngster sixpence, she asked:

"I say, Tommy, did your papa kill my cat?"

"Don't know," grinned Tommy, pocketing the coin; "but there's a loop on the end of our clothes-line and a grave in the garden."

F. W.

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## Experimenting on Pussy.

"George," said the careful mother, "don't eat those ornaments on the top of the cake; they are poisonous."

The ornaments remained on the mantelpiece for two days, when one disappeared.

"George, I am afraid you have eaten one of those ornaments?"

"No, mother, I haven't," was the reply, "but I have given one to the cat, and if he is alive to morrow, I shall eat the other one myself!"

A. H.

## A Recipe for Good Jumping.

"Here, Johnson," roared Bowser from the neighbouring garden, "here's your blessed cat raiding my fowl-house again."

"Is she?" said Johnson, "then why don't you kill her, man? Go for her and wring her neck. It's my wife's cat and I'd like to be rid of the brute."

Thus encouraged, Bowser made a dart at the feline, which promptly jumped on the old fellow's head and over the wall.

"Good gracious! Can't the cat jump!" said Johnson. "Why, man, you've lost her after all."

"Jump, I should think so," retorted Bowser ruefully, "she ought to jump considering the spring chickens the beggar's had."

H. E. L.

## Mews and Pews.

A carpenter, who was repairing a country church, tore down a heavy wire screen that enclosed the belfry, and, when it was removed, three cats were seen to jump from rafter to rafter, and ascend to the peak of the spire.

The carpenter was not able to capture them, but, from his description, they were very peculiar creatures—their fur long and shaggy, and their teeth very prominent, and they were as agile as squirrels.

It is believed that they had been living on the sparrows they caught, but it is not known where they obtained water to drink.

C. H. M.

## Afraid of Cats.

Some people have an unaccountable antipathy for certain objects. They are apparently unable to control the feeling. No power of reason aids them to overcome that which in another person seems mere foolishness and nervousness.

The object held in abhorrence may be a cat, a dog, a mouse, or a snake, the mere sight, even suggestion of which, affects the person very strongly. Serious consequences have sometimes resulted from a desire to overcome or play upon this weakness, by those who thought it but an affectation. But this is wrong, and a cruelty. Witness the following instance:

Brigadier-General Robertdau was once dining with a party of friends at a hotel. Someone had heard of his antipathy to cats, and thinking it would be amusing to play a trick on him, planned to bring a cat into the dining-room while they were at dinner.

At a given signal, one of the waiters quietly brought in a cat, unseen by the general, and the first that he knew was that the cat was climbing in his lap.

General Robertdau turned pale, dropped his knife and fork, faintly exclaimed, "A cat!" and fell back in his chair in a spasm.

All present were greatly alarmed, and immediate measures were taken to revive the fainting man. The dinner was forgotten. Finally he came out of the fit, and shuddered as he looked round for the object of disturbance.

The gentleman who had thus played on the general's weakness was profuse in apologies, declaring that he would have lost his right arm rather than do such an act, had he known his friend would have been so affected.

The general said it was a weakness over which he had no control; that he had tried vainly to overcome his repugnance to cats, and he would rather any time face the cannon's mouth or point of the bayonet than have a cat near him.

M. H.

## Had all the Qualifications.

Here is a rebuke administered to a hard bargainer who sent the following advertisement to a paper:

"A lady in delicate health wishes to meet with a useful companion. She must be domesticated, musical, an early riser, amiable, of good appearance, and have some experience in nursing; a total abstainer preferred. Comfortable home; no salary."

A few days afterwards the advertiser received by express a basket labelled:

"This side up with care; perishable."

On opening it she found a tabby cat with a letter tied to its tail. It ran thus:

"Madam, in response to your advertisement, I am happy to furnish you with a very useful companion, which you will find exactly to your requirements. She is domesticated, a good vocalist, an early riser, has an amiable disposition, and is considered handsome. She has had great experience as a nurse, having brought up a large family; total abstainer. As salary is no object she will serve you faithfully in return for a comfortable home."

H. C. G. S.

## Pussy as a Railway Pet.

Thousands of people have heard of railway dogs, which travel so extensively, and really seem to know as much about trains and time-tables as a guard does. But there is a cat in Colorado which is certainly as remarkable in its fondness for railway riding.

It was a pet of the wife of the engineer of a goods locomotive, and now it accompanies the engineer on every trip that he makes. When the train has to make a long wait, the cat goes off in search of mice, always returning when the whistle sounds, and at some of the stations it is quite a pet.

When the engine is running, the cat sits in the cab or on the coal, and, as its fur is jet black, its beauty is not greatly impaired by its grimy surroundings.

Pussy must have travelled many thousands of miles, for it has been doing duty for several years, and has never been known to miss a trip,

That cats care little for persons and are attached to places and to their environment was seen in the case of this cat last year.

The engineer was badly hurt in a collision, and was laid up for three months. Instead of the cat following him, as a dog would doubtless have done, she stayed about the sheds until the engine was repaired, and then she once more resumed her rides with the substitute engineer.

E. G.

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# Waring's Letter.

WARING wrote no letters, but simply sat and smoked watching the other men with a half-cynical, half-regretful feeling of loneliness. For no one in far-away England would hang on the postman's knock for his letter—he was alone in the world, one of those logs on the social sea, that drift past without breaking the slumber of any man's regret.

To-night he allowed himself the rare luxury of self-compassion. At ordinary times he abhorred the failing but to-night, as he watched his brother officers scribbling home to their dear ones—to sweethearts, wives and mothers—Waring vaguely regretted the lack, in his case, of either sweetheart, wife, or mother.

The latter had died many years ago when Waring was a little lad resplendent in a velvet suit and curls. Wife he had never known, and sweetheart—he had once.

And for a moment, as Waring conjured up a vision of the old, happy days, with all their garnered store of "might-have-beens" the hard stern lines of his mouth softened, and the regular puffs of tobacco smoke degenerated into fitful clouds.

Pulling himself up with an effort he instinctively glanced at the bowed head of Captain Bob Brazil, who was hastily scribbling off letter after letter.

For Bob Brazil was one of the corner-stones in Waring's hidden away-romance.

Presently the former looked up, and the serious aspect of his face was merged in a smile as he met Waring's enigmatic glance.

"Lazying, as usual, old chap," he cried. "What a blessing it is, after all, to have no friends!"

Waring shrivelled up a little at the thoughtless remark, but his voice was the perfection of *insouciance* as he drawled:

"Yes; after all, we social Robinson Crusoes have our advantages. There are no letters to write, no farewells—beastly fag they must be—no tears to account for, and we go out to battle confident in the assurance that our 'going under' will wrinkle the brow of nobody. Yes, as you say, it has its blessings—and curses," he added under his breath.

Brazil detected the pathos behind Waring's cynical words.

"To-morrow may be a bad day for some of us, old chap," he said rather huskily, "and I know you must feel beastly lonely, having no relations to whom you can scribble a last few words. Why don't you send a line to Rose? You two are such old friends and I am sure she would be glad to know you remembered old friends at what may be, perhaps, the finish.

Forgotten. Good Heavens! thought Waring, with a faint shiver, did he ever forget her? Was she ever absent from his thoughts during those last five bitter years?

For Brazil's wife was the other corner-stone, the builder and wrecker of the old-time story, whose ruins Waring kept locked away carefully behind the walls of a lazy cynicism.

He was a modern man distinctly, so his tragedy partook of the quiet order of tragedies, and Brazil never dreamt that to his wife's influence was due the bitter scepticism of his old school chum and brother officer.

"They had been old friends," thought Waring with a shadowy smile, "but Brazil never suspected the possibility of their having ever been anything more than friends."

It all happened so long ago, quite five years ago, and the pages of life-stories get grievously thumbed and worn and out-of-date after five years of this self-contained nineteenth century of ours.

But although Waring's story was a well-thumbed one, the memory of its halcyon days was keen and vigorous as he blew a cloud of smoke through mocking lips and turned to Brazil.

"It's awfully kind and thoughtful, old chap," he said, "but Mrs. Brazil will have in you too great a claim on her interest to waste any of it on a superfluity like me. I appreciate your motive, but if I've got to go under, I prefer to do it without making a fuss."

"I thought you might like to write," said Brazil, "you seemed so solitary, and so altogether out of it, as it were, that I——"

"Thank you, Bob," Waring broke in gratefully, "I

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understand, old man, but," with an enigmatical smile, "if you don't mind, I think I'll die—silently."

"As you please, of course, Waring," replied Brazil, "but I'm sure Rose would be glad of a line from you. However, as I haven't closed my own letter yet, I'll send your remembrances. May I?"

"Yes," said Waring, with a little smile, "Oh, yes, you may send my—my remembrances."

"Remembrances! Remembrances," he muttered, as Brazil resumed his writing, "what an obtuse world we live in. Poor old Bob has never grasped the possibility of even 'old friends' falling in love. I wonder what he would think if he knew that five years ago his wife and I—bah! what a silly ass I am, and she—she doubtless has quite forgotten the episode of an 'old friend.'"

But although Waring smiled contemptuously at what he dubbed his folly, the "episode" still continued to occupy a central position in his thoughts.

It was only one more of these silent stories, written often-times with ink from the hearts of men and women, but never published and never read.

Six years before Rose Campbell and Waring had been more than friends—they were lovers. Waring had little more than his pay in those days, and Rose's people being rather prone to goods and material, the engagement had been a secret one

But fate unfortunately subverts occasionally the plans of the wisest mortals, and unlooked-for complications ensued when Bob Brazil, Waring's brother officer, an old school chum, fell in love with Waring's sweetheart.

Brazil belonging distinctly to the enviable category of "eligibles," his overtures received the parental sanction, and were forwarded with all the diplomacy of the parental mind.

Unfortunately for the happiness of Rose and Waring the latter, although superficially of an emotional nature, was in reality of a hyper-sensitive and excitable temperament, and this, in conjunction with the hopelessness of his financial position, produced an era of misery partly real and partly self-inflicted.

With the unfortunate perversity of such natures he began to read into Brazil's movements encouragement on the part of Rose.

The latter being excessively proud, this was the beginning of the end, which culminated one day in a rupture, all the more irretrievable because of its self-contained quietness.

In social life, however, their relations were as amicable as old friendship should be, but some time later Rose Campbell changed her latter name to Brazil.

As became an Englishman born and bred in the traditions of nineteenth century self-control, Waring took his *congé* with commendable *sang froid*. The old hidden-away shattered love story was respectably swept away into a dark corner amongst the other fragments of *de trop* sentiments, and apparently forgotten.

Only, quite suddenly, he developed an abnormal growth of cynicism and disbelief in things generally, with a special clause relating to women. He never for a moment doubted the reality of the Brazils' domestic felicity. Neither did he dream that the one woman in the world whom he would ever love, had made the great mistake of a lifetime.

And Brazil, luckily for his mental peace, never knew that his marriage had been a big failure to at least one of the contracting parties.

And so the years drifted past, quietly and peacefully, years in England generally do, and the smiling surface of life's stream was never ruffled by the tempest of aching hearts below.

A period came at last, however, when the years in England were quiet no longer. Hostilities had begun in South Africa and soon afterwards Brazil and Waring went to war.

The latter cool and cynical, Brazil depressed at leaving his wife, but hopeful of soon seeing her again, whilst at home, in mourning London, a woman hung over a few letters and a photograph and cried her heart out quietly for the mistake of five years before.

And to-night on the eve of a great battle Waring also thought of that time five years ago, and in the rising clouds of tobacco-smoke pieced together the broken fragments of memories long repressed.

All the softness he had tried so hard to stifle crept back into his heart, and as the old sweet ideal of the woman he had loved came back again, Waring's eyes grew strangely misty.

"Strong tobacco," he muttered, with a touch of his old sneering cynicism, "must try a lighter brand if I live over to-morrow."

Aye, if he did live over to-morrow? For a strange premonition of disaster had been overshadowing him all day, and although not a superstitious man, Waring instinctively felt that the vivid recall of those old romantic days was an omen of approaching disaster.

"To-morrow, perhaps," he thought, "would witness for him the solving of Life's great problem of apparent inequality—he would perhaps learn the why and the wherefore of what his whole soul had rebelled against for five years, the Master's great plan of human suffering. He would know the reason why, to men like Brazil yonder, happiness came perpetually and was accepted as a matter of course—why the sun always shone on their side of the road, whilst poor devils like he, Waring, walked for ever in the shade.

Even as he thought, there crept round his soul a strange tranquility, and all the pent-up harshness towards the woman who had shattered his happiness faded away like a bad dream, and only forgiveness remained.

He felt himself to be stepping up close to the boundary line of eternity to-night, and a wild desire presently seized him to let her know the strange emotion that possessed him—to tell her that even five years' cynicism had failed to eradicate the purest emotion he had ever known.

Yes, Brazil had asked him to write, and he would write. After all, what would it matter to her, and it would bring much rest to him to-night. What could it matter? After to-morrow he would never offend a living soul again—of that he felt perfectly certain.

And even as Waring thought of to-morrow's probabilities, the conviction that he would never fight again grew into a fixed and absolute certainty.

So what mattered it whether he wrote a letter or not—to her—nothing; whilst to him, it meant—a feeling of peace, nay even of vague happiness at the laying-down of life's burden.

With a "good-night" he presently rose and walked rapidly to his own little tent.

There he hunted up an old and battered writing case, and began to write his letter.

No suitable style of address suggested itself immediately, and for some time Waring stared out through the opening in the tent, into the grey and misty night beyond.

Mechanically he noted how one small star struggled

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painfully to penetrate the murky atmosphere, then began to write simply and without prefix of any kind:

"If the writing of this letter offends you, try and think of me a little more leniently when you fully grasp the circumstances under which it is written. Believing, as I do, that I am now scribbling my last letter on earth, I am writing as straight from my heart as the medium of words will allow.

"A great battle is impending, one which, some strange feeling tells me to-night I will never come through. My implicit belief in this ominous emotion has aroused in me an uncontrollable desire to write you a few words of farewell.

"Standing on the brink of eternity, man sometimes sees things clearer and in a fairer light than he is ordinarily accustomed to, and to-night all my rebelliousness at what fate meted out to me five years ago has vanished. After all, you had your happiness—mine was a cheap price to pay for that.

"You used to care for me once—when you think of that, try to forgive me for saying now, at my last hour, I still love you.

"It won't hurt you, and the saying of it makes the way a bit smoother for me.

"In saying 'I love you' I have said all, and it makes dying more easy for me. To the love of five years ago I say 'Good-bye. God keep her safely.'

"John Waring."

* * * * * *

No man on board the great Cape liner *Good Hope*, as she reached her moorings in Southampton Water, cared less about his home-coming than Major John Waring, D.S.O.

Six months had come and gone since he wrote that letter, the writing of which, he felt convinced, would be his last literary effort on earth.

But although death had swept away many of his fellow officers, Bob Brazil amongst them, "the man with the scythe" had left him unscathed.

"Threatened men," they say, "live long," and the strange foreboding that prompted Waring to write the fateful letter to the woman who had wrecked his happiness, years before, had resulted in nothing worse than a bad wound.

The great battle, however, had left many widows in far-away England, amongst them being Rose Brazil.

And Waring's letter?

It was the one thing that disturbed the apathetic carelessness of his home-coming. Many times since that fateful night on which it had been written, Waring had cursed himself for being such a superstitious ass. Following immediately on her husband's death, its receipt must, he thought, intensify her old antipathy towards him.

How could he undo that wretched scrawl? What apologies could he make? None. No power of his could undo the past. What was written was written, without hope of recovery or alteration, and Waring dreaded accordingly his first meeting with Rose Brazil.

Even as Waring's uncomfortable speculations ran on, the great ship had drawn up alongside the quay and friends were rushing into the arms of friends. Waring had seen the same scene enacted many times before, and had looked on indifferently, but now as he watched the eager, loving faces, a strange feeling of loneliness and social isolation swept through him.

"No one would meet him," he thought with a queer little pang of regret. "No one——"

Suddenly, as he stepped ashore, a woman dressed in deep black came towards him quickly.

It was Rose Brazil.

"You!" he muttered amazedly.

"Yes," she said gently, "I saw your name amongst the list of passengers, and as I knew you would have no one to welcome you home—I——"

"Thank you," said Waring, with a swift look of gratitude, "it was awfully good of you—but—but—have you received my letter?" he added suddenly, remembering himself.

"Yes," she said, flushing softly, "I got your letter."

"And you forgive?" he whispered anxiously. She did not reply immediately and they had walked some distance from the crowd before she spoke.

Then she turned towards him and her eyes were filled with tears.

"If people knew," she said, "they would say my conduct in coming here to meet you, so soon after his death, was everything that was bad and unwomanly, and I suppose it is wrong and sinful. But I couldn't help it—Heaven knows I couldn't. I have never loved any one but you. Oh, John," she whispered, and her lips quivered pathetically, "there was a big mistake made five years ago. For Heaven's sake don't let us make any more."

Nolan of Castleknock.

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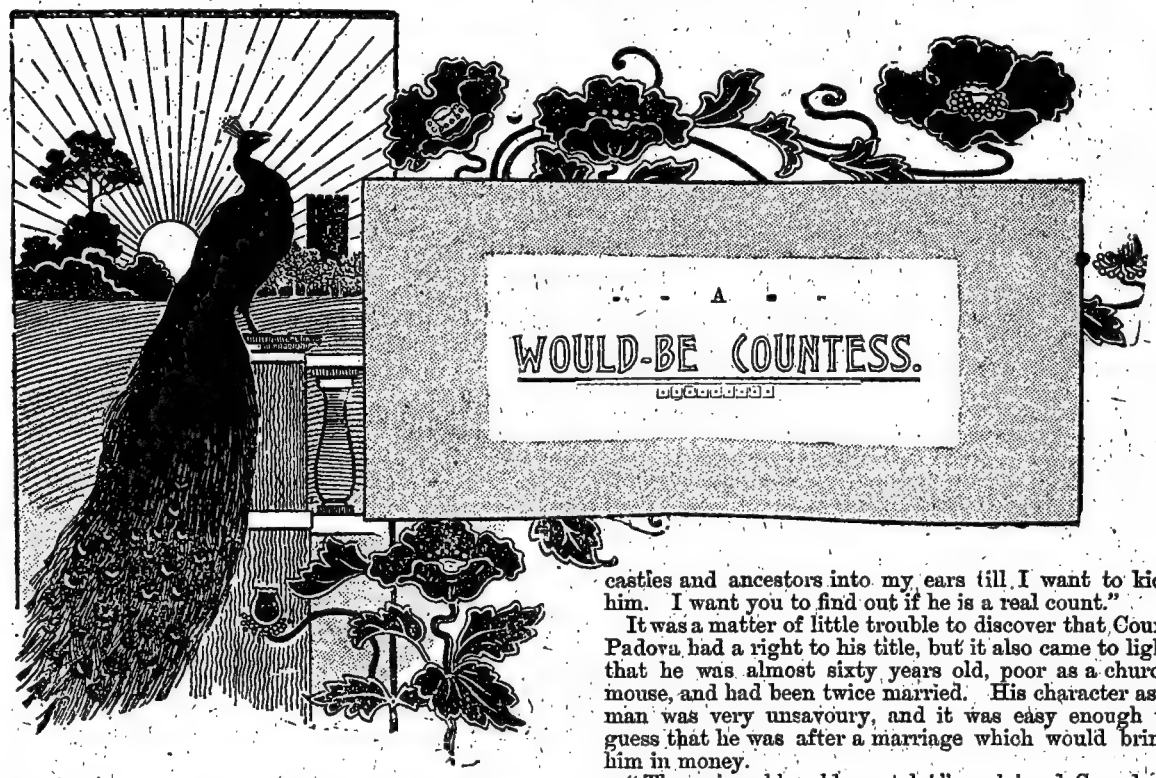


When I reached Leghorn I found myself in the company of two people I had heard of several times before in Italy. They were James Saunders, widower, and his daughter, Eileen, of New York.

He was a man of sixty and rather an invalid, and she was a girl of twenty who had an overwhelming desire to become an Italian countess. Mr. Saunders was a frank, blunt-spoken man. I hadn't known him an hour before I knew all his troubles.

He had amassed wealth, and he loved his daughter but he had no use for a son-in-law not born in America.

"I don't know what on earth possesses the girl," he said, when referring to Eileen, who had been plain Ellen before the steamer left New York. "She's just gone mad on the title business. At home she'd have been satisfied with a colonel, a judge, or an honourable, but now she declares that nothing less than being a countess will do.

"It seems as if all the counts in Italy had heard of her desires and the size of my banking account, and they have hung on our heels by the dozen. It's no use for me to talk to the girl. She gets highty-tighty the minute we start to argue, and if I don't give in to her she sulks for a week. Do you know anything about Italian counts?"

"Very little," I replied.

"As near as I can find out they are a mighty poor lot, take 'em as you find 'em, and I haven't seen one I'd hire for a coachman. There's one fellow in particular I'd break in two if I was twenty years younger and could run him down. He's followed us for a month, and the girl seems to be altogether gone on him. I say, now, but I want you to do something for me. He calls himself Count Padova, and he's drummed his title and castles and ancestors into my ears till I want to kick him. I want you to find out if he is a real count."

It was a matter of little trouble to discover that Count Padova had a right to his title, but it also came to light that he was almost sixty years old, poor as a church mouse, and had been twice married. His character as a man was very unsavoury, and it was easy enough to guess that he was after a marriage which would bring him in money.

"The miserable old wretch!" exclaimed Saunders, when I made my report. "I thought that he was an old sinner, and that he was trying his best to knock twenty years off his age. Why, hang the man, I'm sure he's got a wax nose, false teeth and a wooden leg, and that without his wig we'd find his head as bare as a billiard ball! I want you to help me save Ellen."

"But she can't marry without your consent and assistance," I replied.

"But she'll keep at me till I give my consent and assistance," he protested. "Think of it, will you—the daughter of James Saunders, a straight-haired Yankee Doodle Dandee, picking up with a lop-shouldered, knock-kneed, played-out old Italian grandfather just for the sake of being called Countess Padova! Why, I want to hit myself and break the dishes when I think of it! I want you to have a talk with the girl and tell her what a fool she is making of herself."

I naturally refused to take any part in the matter, though willing to offer such outside advice as might help the father. Indeed, one look at Eileen satisfied me that at my first word she'd retaliate with a mighty snub.

It was four or five days before I got sight of Count Padova. He had probably been obliged to fish round to get his railway fare from Florence. I found him all that Saunders had described him, and a little more. He had been washed and wrung out and bleached until one could think only of an old towel on a clothes line.

We didn't hit it off at all. He saw in me a rival, and straightening up as far as possible and assuming what he probably thought was a ferocious dignity, he advanced upon me and said:

"Sir, I am the Count Padova!"

"Well, what of it?" I queried.

"And the affianced husband of Miss Saunders."

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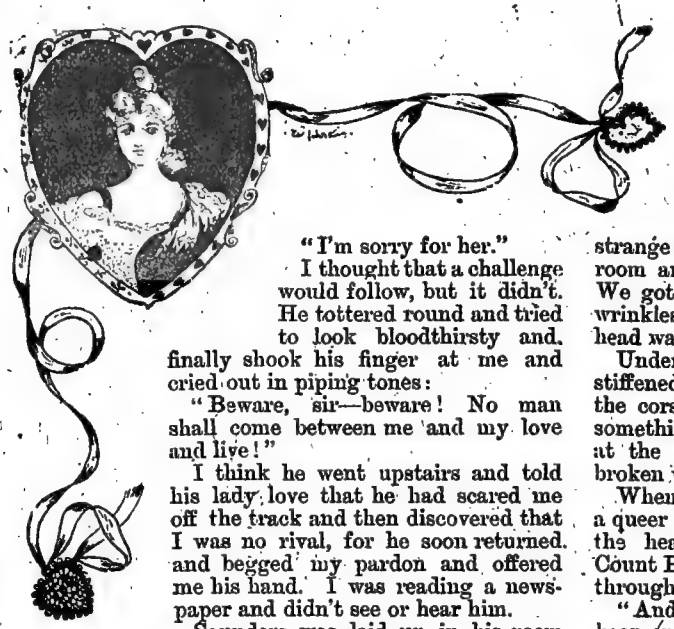

"I'm sorry for her."

I thought that a challenge would follow, but it didn't. He tottered round and tried to look bloodthirsty and, finally shook his finger at me and cried out in piping tones:

"Beware, sir—beware! No man shall come between me and my love and live!"

I think he went upstairs and told his lady love that he had scared me off the track and then discovered that I was no rival, for he soon returned, and begged my pardon and offered me his hand. I was reading a newspaper and didn't see or hear him.

Saunders was laid up in his room that day, but he came down after dinner and groaned out as he met me:

"My last hope is gone! Ellen tells me she has accepted the count, and the beggar is going to have the fact published to-morrow."

"But suppose you refuse your sanction and order the old beggar to get?"

"Oh, you don't know Ellen. I threatened to do that and she declared she'd elope with him."

"And what if you told the count he should never touch a shilling of your money?"

"He'd smile and smirk and take it for a bluff. By Jove, though, but I'd pay a bravo a thousand pounds in gold to break his old neck. You know about these bravos. Go out and find one for me, and tell him to come round with a sand bag."

The man was really in wretched spirits over the affair. It would not have taken some fathers two minutes to end it, but he was ill and morbid, and his strength of character was gone for the time.

We sat talking for an hour and then went up-stairs and joined the couple on the balcony. The daughter received us very coolly, but the count had been drinking and was good natured and voluble. I had insulted him, but I was a friend of the charming Miss Saunders and her respected father, and he would overlook it.

We were a little family party, and we were by ourselves on a little balcony, and he would take advantage of the occasion to say that in seeking the hand of the fair girl before him he was incited by love alone.

He was forty-five years old and lonely. He wanted to love and be loved. Money to him was as to the cobblestones in the street. He had estates in Sardinia, in Lombardy and in Umbria. He had castles in Tuscany, Naples and Sicily. He had gold mines in the Alps, silver mines in the Carnics and lead mines in the Apennines. And as to his social standing, who could desire more than to be the confidant of the ruler of the land?

The old count knew how to lay it on thick, and it was entertaining to hear him talk, but at the same time one could not help but pity the father and feel provoked at the daughter.

The aged lover was still exploiting when he suddenly pitched forwards out of his chair. The girl screamed out and ran away to her room, and I was for bringing a doctor as quickly as possible when Saunders protested:

"Hold on a bit. The old vagabond has only fainted away. Let's see what he's made of."

We went to work, and the results were strange enough. I brought soap and water from my room and the first thing we took off was a false brow. We got enough enamel off his face to reveal a score of wrinkles, and it was discovered that every tooth in his head was false.

Under his wig was a shiny pate and his backbone was stiffened with a corset. I believe it was the tightness of the corset that had caused him to faint. There was something still to come. His right leg was supported at the knee by a brace, and a nose which had been broken was neatly patched up with wax.

When we had taken the old fellow all to pieces he was a queer sight to look at, and it was hard to tell whether the heap on the chair or the heap on the floor was Count Padova. He had partly revived before we got through and he cackled away like an old hen.

"And this," groaned Saunders, as he pointed to the heap on the chair, "this was to be my son-in-law! This was what my daughter was to marry to be called a countess! I want her here."

He was back with her in a moment. I lifted the count to a sitting position, and he was chattering of love and castles as the girl got sight of him.

"What have you done!" shrieked the daughter, as she turned from the grisly spectacle to us.

"We've simply taken him apart," replied the father, "and the best part of him is on the chair there."

When the would-be countess had fled we sent for help to get Count Padova to his room.

He had to be handled with care. Any sudden movement might have pulled a limb or his head off. There was considerable hilarity among the servants, and it was left to them to glue the pieces together again and make a man. When morning came he had disappeared, and he had not even left a farewell note behind. A day later Saunders said to me:

"Good heavens, man, but I feel like dancing a hornpipe! There is to be no countess in our family. Ellen has written to a young lawyer in Chicago and said yes to his proposal and we are making ready to start for home. Come out and have three drinks and a hurrah with me!"

John Winthrup Green.


# DO YOU DIVE?

Learn the fine art of diving by reading a splendid article on this subject in the July number of PEARSON'S MAGAZINE, illustrated with the most marvellous series of photographs that have ever been taken.

The July PEARSON'S, now on sale, price sixpence, contains no fewer than twenty splendid stories, articles, and poems—enough of the best light literature to last you a month.


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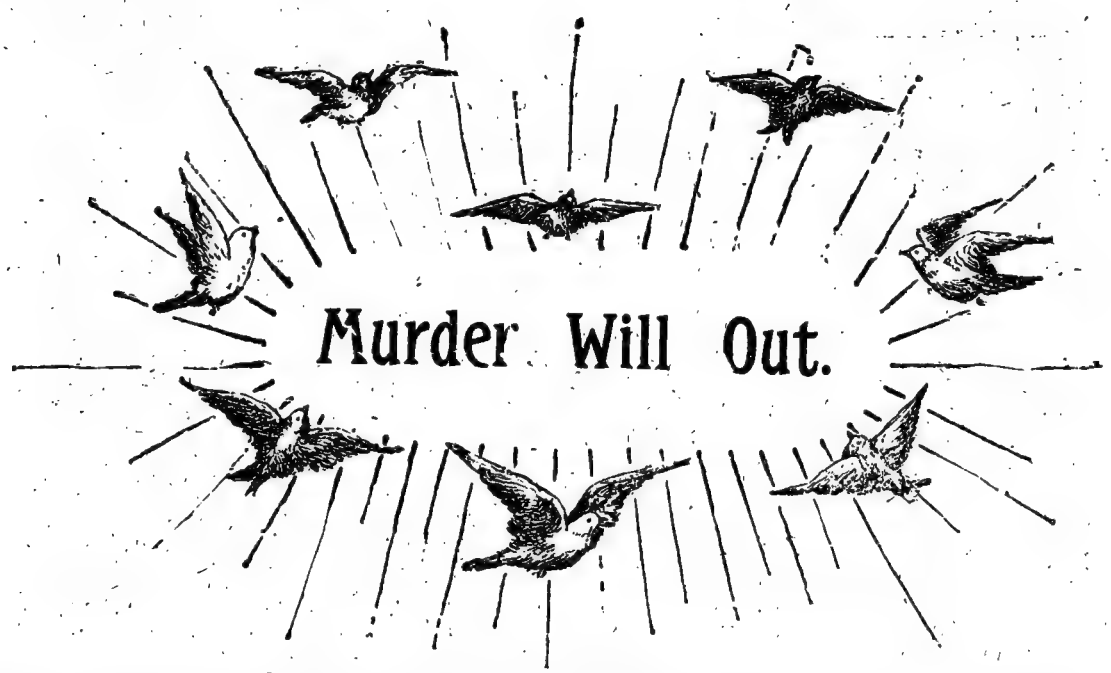

# Murder Will Out.

I was never a girl hard to please, but I could not help feeling angry with my hostess for picking him out to take me in to dinner.

His whole cadaverous appearance was most uninteresting—his eyes were of a watery nondescript hue—and the impression given one was that of a washed-out semi-animate individual whose only redeeming features were a more than average height and the appearance of muscle in his gaunt anatomy.

This seems very paltry, but somehow we girls are very apt to judge men by first appearances, and so I felt distinctly angry and disposed to be most oyster-like to my partner. He came up in a limp, sidling manner, and offered me his arm without a word. We followed the rest.

My discomfiture was a little alleviated when I found my other neighbour was Richard Deeron whom I had met once or twice and whom I rather liked, perhaps from the fact that he had flattered my vanity by appearing interested in my company, and his deeds of prowess—told by himself, by the way—in his travels and career (he was in the army) had the usual effect on the mind of a girl just out of her teens.

His companion was a querulous old lady who was already making herself agreeable to any and everybody; so I saw an opportunity of engaging Captain Deeron's attention to the neglect of my own partner.

The latter's name was Eversey; I fancied that somebody had told me he also had travelled considerably in a journalistic capacity and had vanished for some considerable time recently from the public ken.

Deeron, seizing the opportunity, turned to me:

"This is a pleasure, Miss Hurtlas," he said in his usual manner which savoured much of the *suaviter*. "I was in hopes Mrs. Masham would let me take you down. My old lady, however, is quite happy. By the way, who is your companion?"

He elevated his eyebrows as he said this and looked at Eversey, who happened to be facing him. I fancied Deeron's gaze suddenly dropped as he met the other man's eyes, tho' Eversey showed no signs of recognition, and might have been been posing as a Dutch doll by the lack of interest which he showed.

"I think his name's Eversey," I said quietly, "but don't you know him?"

"I—oh no! though I seem to know his face. But then you see I meet so many fellows that we can scarcely remember one half the occasions or the men."

I felt scarcely satisfied with his answer, but the conversation which was generally too low for the others to hear was soon instrumental in driving away any wonder I felt.

The dinner was a success. My hostess was generally happy in her company.

The old dowager on Deeron's right talked at the top of her voice to Colonel Masham—a brother of the host—across the table, and conversation everywhere was general.

Deeron devoted himself to me. My partner on the other side, beyond a few remarks essential to the occasion, said little, though I noticed that every now and then he turned his passionless face towards us, and at times even showed a little interest as Deeron's narrations grew in loudness.

"I never told you, Miss Hurtlas, of an experience I had in the last frontier business. We had been dodging the beggars all day—grim work it was too—and we, that is, twenty of us, were sent on in advance to find the whereabouts of a poor chap of a war correspondent, who was captured three days before, and whom we had heard from a prisoner was still alive. The enemy had not been seen for some time; we had reason to believe they had retired to their camp in the other direction. We made our way—it was about six o'clock in the evening—and after an hour's gentle picking of our path along the side of the Larri pass towards Nawpur, we came suddenly upon an old battlement lower down the side of the hill. From information we knew that our object of search was probably here.

"We did not anticipate many opponents, and the

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advantage gained by a surprise seemed likely to balance any inequality of numbers."

By this time most of the company at our end of the table were listening to Deeron, who was quite in his element as an object of interest.

Eversey even was showing animated attention.

Deeron went on:

"Stealing down the side of the hill we came upon an old heavy wooden gate which curiously was ajar. We decided to attack. There was no sign of life. Immediately opposite the door was a building about twenty yards long bordered partly by a moat which, surrounding the whole of the building except where we were, approached within five yards of the door. There was another door in the wall opposite, and this also stood open. There seemed a small roadway therefore to cross between the two doors.

"We began to enter. Before more than half a dozen had entered, the heavy door swung to, shutting out the rest, the wooden roadway which was merely a sort of bridge gave way, and we were precipitated into the green slimy waters of the moat.

"After floundering about for a moment or two, in doubt as to what was to happen next, we found we could do nothing but swim or wade up to our armpits. Nobody could be seen. We could hear our men outside firing at intervals to attract the wretches out, but it was bound to be some time before they could manage to scale the outer wall."

Dinner was now practically over, but the ladies clamoured that the tale should be finished, and even Eversey, when the other men did so, added his request.

"Well," continued Deeron, "we slowly waded on in the dirty water till of a sudden from one of the little openings at the top of the building was thrown the body of a white man.

"We had no time to speculate on the meaning of this, before the moat was alive with what made our blood go cold—alligators in front of us disturbed by the sudden splash. We gave ourselves up as lost. Our rifles were useless, but our revolvers were all right, and these we began to use on the monsters.

"There were a couple of ledges of about the thickness of an ordinary brick—one about a foot below the surface of the water and the other about four feet higher up the outer wall. These we raised ourselves upon, and firing as we went we began to creep back to the entrance.

"The rest of the story has little to tell. We had lost two of our fellows, and doubtless the creatures had made a meal of the body thrown in as well. This doubtless was of the man we went to rescue.

"By the time we reached the gate, our men had succeeded in opening it, but we could do no more than get outside and make our way back to the column."

"You, of course, reported the death of the journalist," said Eversey, and as we turned to him I noticed a gleam of interest I never had expected in his face. He seemed another man. We felt something strange was to come.

Deeron, taken aback by what we thought was the irrelevant remark, said, "Of course I did. Why——"

The old colonel here intervened.

"Yes, I heard of the business; but I had a hazy idea that the newspaper man turned up after some time."

Deeron's face turned a ghastly white.

Before he could stammer out anything, Eversey leant over and said slowly:

"You made a slight mistake in your official report, Captain Deeron. You reported his death. You should have reported his attempted murder.

"May I give a slightly altered version? When you got on the ledge, the alligators began to snap at you. You, sir, were far too terrorised to use your revolver. You, however, saved your life by pushing the man behind you in to take the brute's attention. That man was the newspaper man. But he was not killed. By the greatest of wonders he escaped with the loss of two fingers, and was recaptured just as you went and escaped three months ago."

Deeron, white to the lips, could only put on a sort of sneer of desperation and demand Eversey's right to question his narrative.

"Because, Captain Deeron, I was the correspondent and your would-be victim. Don't be alarmed, sir, my only wish is to revenge myself solely by contradicting your statement. My own feeling for you is not so much hatred as contempt."

Deeron, amid a grim silence, slowly slunk out of the house, to be heard of no more by us, save through the *Gazette* which told us he had sent in his papers.

* * * * *

Those first impressions of mine I view with mixed feelings, for if I had not devoted myself to Deeron that evening, the tale might not have come out, and the revulsion of feeling might not have been strong enough to cause another *dénouement*.

I am now the wife of a newspaper man, and his name is Eversey.

S. B.

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# VIE D'OR FOR THE HAIR.

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| 1,000 Ladies' Dress Lengths (Navy Blue Serge, 6 yds., double width) 7/6 each ... ... | 375 | 0 |
| 400 White Linen Table Cloths, 70in. square, 6s. each ... | 120 | 0 |
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# THE BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

In these competitions a prize of £2 will be awarded each week to the competitor whose attempt we receive giving the correct solutions of all the puzzles. If more than one is absolutely correct the prize of £2 will be given to the first correct attempt dealt with.

If no lists of absolutely correct solutions are sent in the first prize will be awarded to the competitor whose attempt is first dealt with showing the fewest mistakes.

Each week we shall award in addition to the above, either ten of our silver plated pencil-cases or ten popular six shilling novels, to be distributed amongst the competitors whose attempts are absolutely correct and have failed to win the first prize, or, if no complete lists of correct solutions are received, to those whose attempts show the fewest mistakes.

Write all your solutions on one sheet of paper, putting the number against each. Post the batch in an envelope marked "Brain Gymnasium," to reach the Editor, Short Stories, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C., by first post on Monday, July 16th, 1900.

## No. 163.

How can 100 be expressed by a repetition of the same figure six times over?

## No. 164.

**AAA D EEEE CCCCCC II K LL NN OOOO RRR S WW.**

Re-arrange the above letters to form a double word-square. The connecting word is a British city.

## No. 165.

I am a piece of furniture; behead me and I am a part of the body. Change my head, and I am more than one. Behead me, and I am invisible. Change my head, and I am a kind of tree. Change my tail and I am part of a fish.

## No. 166.

One-eighth of terrible, plus two-fifths of brutal, plus two-fifths of piece, plus one-fifth of enter, plus one-fourth of timorous, plus one-eighth of American, plus one-sixth of belong. The sum will give the name of a mineral product.

## No. 167.

My 3, 28, 15, 26, is Paradise.
My 18, 19, 8, 1, 23, 6, is to hurry.
My 2, 5, 16, 9, 10, 21, is one who lives in solitude.
My 25, 26, 27, 13, 12, is value.
My 24, 22, 14, 4, is a large vessel.
My 11, 16, 7, 17, is sand.

## No. 168.

"No!" I said, as FIRST I planted,
Firmly on the grassy plot;
"I will not go to the SECOND,
As this weather is too hot."
As my THIRD I scratched, I murmured,
"Soon again my WHOLE I'll see,
When the swallows have gone southward."
Then I wandered in for tea.

## RESULT OF BRAIN GYMNASIUM.

**Nos. 136 to 141.**

The prize of £2 has been awarded this week to Mr. Walter Jordan, Scariff, Limerick, Ireland, whose solution was the first correct one dealt with.

A copy of "The Pursuit of Camilla," by Clemintina Black, has been sent to:

Miss Edith Auber, Thornleigh, Sunningdale, Berks.
Edgar Lee, 8 Praed Street, Paddington, W.
B. H. Bennitt, Clent House, Harborne, Staffs.
W. B. Heberden, Stanford Rectory, Loughborough.
J. Williams, 22 St. John Street, Essex Road, N.
George Simpson, Elmhurst, Langley Road, Merton Park, Surrey.
T. P. Cowling, "Gomm" Schools, Plough Road, Rotherhithe, S.E.
T. Tatlow, 136 Main Street, Bulwell, Nottingham.
G. Richardson, Prospect Villa, Waltham Cross.
Frane Macauley, 165 Moncur Street, Glasgow, E.

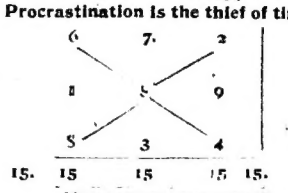
## SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

**Nos. 142 to 147.**

No. 142. **Write down the Roman figures, draw a line through the middle. The upper half will be VII.**

No. 143. **Procrastination is the thief of time.**

No. 144.




No. 145. **The squirrel each day takes out one ear of corn and his own two ears.**

No. 146. **PENMANSHIP.**

No. 147.

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O range
S ardine
A berdeen
L ivingstone
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D iamond

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